

Guthrie of the Times

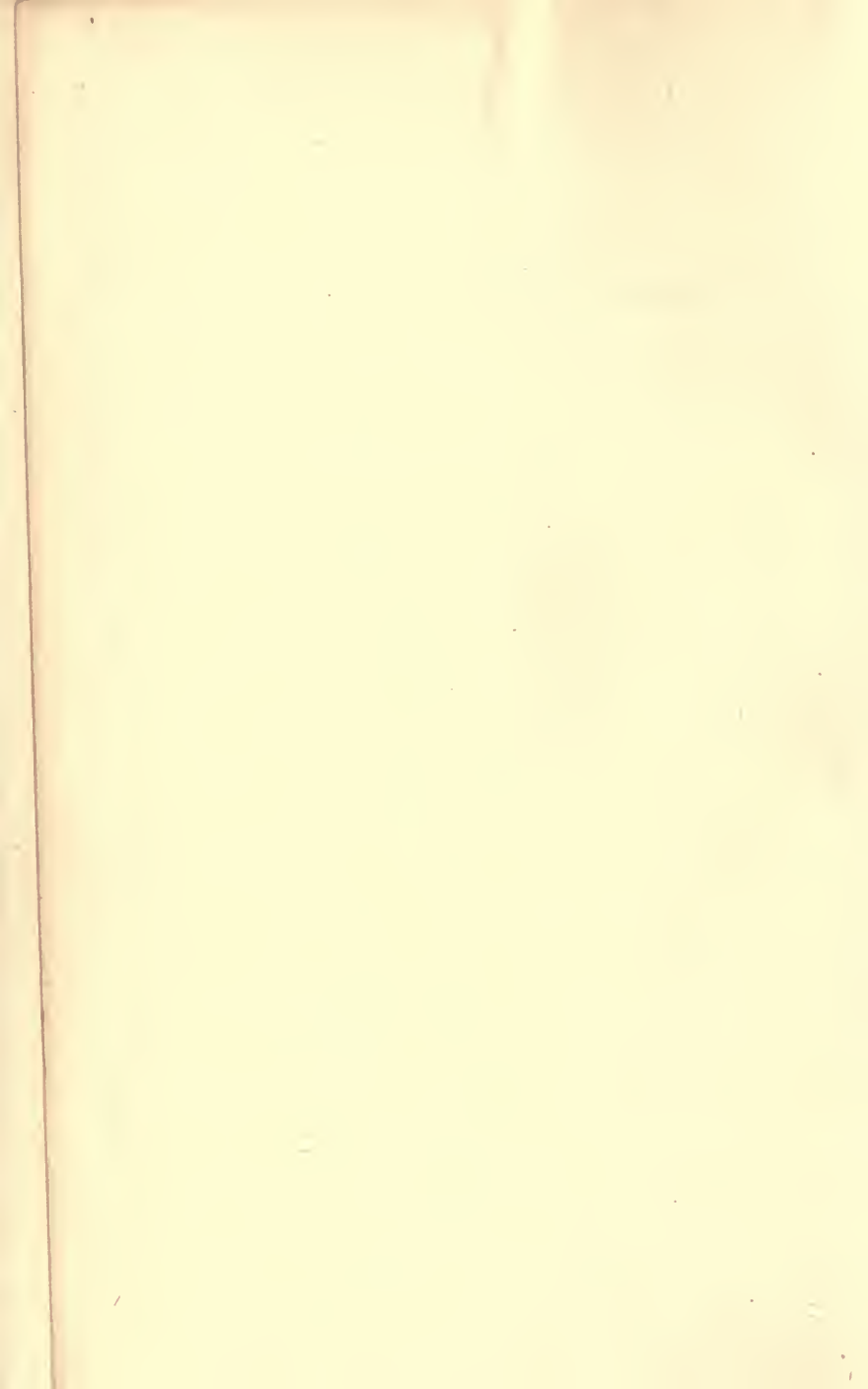
Joseph A. Allsheler



C. H. Smith

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Oloquet, Nov. 1904



GUTHRIE OF THE TIMES

OTHER BOOKS
BY
JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER

Before the Dawn
In Hostile Red
In Circling Camps
The Wilderness Road
A Herald of the West
My Captive
The Last Rebel
A Soldier of Manhattan
The Sun of Saratoga



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“Guthrie knew exactly what he wanted to say, and the sentences flowed from his pen ”

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Guthrie of the Times

A Story of Success

By
JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER

Illustrated by F. R. Gruger



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THE CHARACTERS

WILLIAM GUTHRIE, the correspondent of *The Times*

PHILIP CARTON, the speaker of the House

PAUL HASTINGS, the governor of the State

"JIMMY" WARFIELD, a member of the House

Mr. PURSLEY, a member of the House

The Reverend ZEDEKIAH PIKE, a member of the State
Senate

Mr. COBB, a member of the State Senate

Mr. DENNISON, a United States Senator

THE BISHOP

TEMPLETON, a clerk of the State government

CAIUS MARCELLUS HARLOW, a lobbyist

"PETE" DILGER, a mountain feud leader

CHARLIE WARREN, a New York financier

Mr. STETSON, a famous editor

HENRY CLAY WARNER, a member of Congress

TIMOTHY O'HARA, a ward politician

JOHN RANSOME, a rich merchant

CLARICE RANSOME, John Ransome's daughter

Mrs. RANSOME, John Ransome's wife

LUCY HASTINGS, the governor's wife

MARY PELHAM, a general's daughter

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<p>“Guthrie knew exactly what he wanted to say, and the sentences flowed from his pen ”</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">. <i>Frontispiece</i></p>
<p>“ ‘I know that he is a particular friend of the Governor and yourself,’ replied Clarice, ‘and hence I am afraid not to like him ’ ”</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">FACING PAGE 90</p>
<p>“With his rifle levelled, savage, implacable, never dreaming of mercy ”</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">. . . . 164</p>
<p>“ ‘But I am going to ask for far more than I have now ’ ”</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">. 338</p>

GUTHRIE OF THE TIMES

GUTHRIE OF THE TIMES

A STORY OF SUCCESS

CHAPTER I

THE WRITER AND THE BISHOP

BILLY GUTHRIE of the *Times* was not hard of heart, and he was sorry the papers had come into his hands, because he saw before him an unpleasant duty that must be done. The knowledge was not of his seeking, having been brought to him—and there was some consolation in the thought—but keen though he was in the search of news, he was willing that any other correspondent should have the task of first reporting it to the world.

He had known Templeton a long time, a young man of the kind welcome in any company, quick to tell a good story, and following all amusements with a zest that soon spread to others. Everybody liked Templeton and liked to be with him. It was these qualities of good fellowship, reaching all in a little capital like this, that won for him his responsible place in an office of the State government where much money was handled.

Guthrie's acquaintance with Templeton had not been very intimate—the two men were too unlike in temperament and ambition—but, despite his youth, the

faculty of observation was already highly trained in him by the nature of his profession, and, when he first came to the capital to report the session of the Legislature for the *Times*, he had taken note of Templeton, as one of the figures in the scenic setting.

He had liked Templeton at first, attracted as others were by his easy good humour and adaptability, but after a while he began to wonder how the man could attend to the duties of his office and yet have so much time for good fellowship. The same thought perhaps had occurred to others, but it was said that the influence of Templeton's family, an old and powerful one established three generations in the capital, protected him in a place in which the duties were nominal, or done by others.

Now it was all clear to Guthrie, nor was it a surprise; he had long suspected such an issue; it was a common case, he had come in contact with others like it in the course of his professional career—a fondness for good living, an excessive expenditure, and then a hand in a purse not one's own. The defalcation would not embarrass the department, but it was large enough, and the prominence of Templeton's family would arouse still further interest.

Guthrie put the papers in his pocket, and walked across the tessellated floor of the hotel toward one of the front doors. It was early, but half a dozen members of the House or Senate were already in the lobby which was the heart of the little capital—a natural gathering-place, leading to the half-true jest that more legislation was done there than in the Capitol. All of them spoke courteously, some warmly, to Guthrie, because he was a young man of gravity and weight,

and, moreover, the representative of the State's most powerful newspaper; therefore, he was not to be neglected.

Guthrie replied to their greetings, and went out on the steps, where he stood in the full glory of the morning sunshine, a smoothly-shaven young man, with the clear-cut, classic face that one often sees in this State, which is of both the South and the West, and not wholly of either.

Guthrie breathed the crisp wintry air, and felt that it was good to live. This capital, with its ten thousand people, nestling in the warm hollow between the hills on the two sides of the silver river, always appealed to him—it seemed so snug, so homelike and so content with itself—and he was glad to be there.

But he could not forget Templeton, and he was troubled. For Templeton himself, he did not greatly care, but he knew Templeton's sister, and then there was a mother—such disclosures as these always fall most heavily on the women. His duty, as he saw it, became more unpleasant than ever.

There was a crunch of wheels on the gravel, and Templeton himself in a high cart drove past. Guthrie observed him keenly, and, even at the distance, noticed the black marks of dissipation under his eyes. Then Guthrie looked at his watch.

"Nine-fifteen," he murmured, "and I know that Templeton is due in his office at 8.30."

Templeton drove briskly down the street, and then over the bridge. Guthrie saw him presently, a diminished figure, on the white road that wound among the hills beyond the town, a favourite drive there, and he knew Templeton was enjoying time that really

belonged to the State; but, as for himself, he must go to work.

The session of the Legislature that day was short and dry, and Guthrie, returning to his hotel early in the afternoon, went to his room, where he wrote his brief despatch to the *Times*, telling of the day's events at the Capitol. Then he put it aside, to be filed at six o'clock, and, taking a fresh pad of paper, approached the matter of Templeton's defalcation.

Guthrie's troubled state of mind returned, and again he was sorry that this exclusive piece of news had come into his hands; otherwise, he should have been released from a responsibility that he did not like.

The despatch was hard to begin, and as he tapped the pencil on the paper in thought, his bell rang. The coloured boy handed him a card, with the information that the gentleman was waiting below.

Guthrie read the name on the card with surprise. "The Bishop!" he said to himself. "What can he want with me? At any rate, I must not keep him waiting."

The Bishop was one of the best-beloved men in his State—and beyond it. For forty years, his good deeds had carried his name before him. He was one who always leaned to the side of charity and mercy, and his character was stamped on his features. There were few who were not familiar with his gentle face, the kind eyes and the crown of snow-white hair. Guthrie knew him well; more than once had he been a visitor in his house, and like others he felt a genuine reverence for the Bishop's spotless character, and the noble distinction so well earned.

The Bishop was standing alone in the large parlour,

gazing thoughtfully through the window at the silver band of the river and the lofty curve of the hills beyond, now clothed in the sober brown of winter. But he heard Guthrie's step at the door, and he turned at once.

"My son," he said—the paternal manner became him—"I am glad that I have found you."

"But why did you come here?" exclaimed Guthrie reproachfully. "Had you sent me a message that you wanted me, I should have gone at once to your house. I should have been glad to do so."

"I thought it best to see you here," replied the Bishop. "To have brought you to my house would have been taking—perhaps—an unfair advantage, because, old as I am, it is I who have the favour to ask, and it is for you to grant it—if you will."

A gentle smile lighted up the fine old eyes, but Guthrie, a keen and trained observer, noticed that he moved his fingers nervously. He divined the purpose of the Bishop's errand, and became wary at once, but he replied:

"If there is any way in which I can be of service, it shall be a great pleasure to me to do what you ask."

The Bishop looked again through the window at the silver river and the brown hills beyond. A faint flush came into his face, imparting to it a singular, delicate beauty like that of youth; it was this vivid quality in the Bishop that gave so fine a touch to his life and character.

"Mine is a delicate errand, Mr. Guthrie, and I should have felt some hesitation in coming upon it to any one except yourself, whom I know so well."

Guthrie was silent, his hand resting lightly upon the

back of a chair. The Bishop paused—despite his own words, he hesitated.

“It’s about Mr. Templeton that I wish to speak to you.”

“Yes,” said Guthrie respectfully.

“It has become known to his family that certain facts concerning him were given to you this morning—facts which, if published to the world, would ruin him and disgrace an old and honoured name.”

“It is true,” said Guthrie.

“And these facts, I understand,” continued the Bishop, “are in your hands alone; they have not, I believe, come to the knowledge of any other newspaper man.”

“That also is true,” assented Guthrie.

The Bishop paused, and with one hand threw back the thick, white hair from his brow.

“It is hardly necessary for me, Mr. Guthrie, “to tell now why I am here,” he continued. “His mother and sister came to me at once—they were aware that I had known you all your life, that I had confirmed you—it was very pitiful, their grief and terror. There is no denial of the cruel and disgraceful facts—he took the money, but he did not learn until noon that it had been discovered. They hurried him away an hour later on a train to the North, where he will remain until—until atonement is made, which will be very soon. His family will repay the money, the State will not lose anything, and his good name and theirs will be saved—that is, if you do not send anything about it to your newspaper, and make his disgrace and theirs known to all the world.”

Guthrie moved uneasily, and his eyes shifted away

from the mild gaze of the old Bishop. He felt all the pity and pathos of this tragedy, but as before, his feeling was more for the mother and sister and less for Templeton.

His eyes came back, and met the gaze of the Bishop. The sense of professional duty was strong in him, he considered himself in a way a public servant, one to whom the people of the State looked for a faithful report about their public affairs, an office little, perhaps no less than priestly, and he did not believe that he had a right to take liberties with such a trust.

"If I do not send this report, the crime stands committed nevertheless," he said. "Templeton remains the same."

"It is true that he is the same now," replied the Bishop, "but will he be the same hereafter? If you suppress this report, will you not be giving him another chance—an opportunity to reform? Circumstances have put in your hands the fate of a young man and the honour of an old family; this report is a small matter to you, an incident of the day's work, and why should you hesitate to grant the request of this stricken mother and sister?"

Guthrie was conscious at that moment of a keen sense of admiration for the Bishop's fine face, the humanity and mercy shining from his eyes, the lofty nature of an appeal made without any sacrifice of dignity. Why should he not give the promise at once, and feel the pleasant glow that gratitude confers? But the sense of duty to his profession, his loyalty to those whom he served, came back to him, and, with it, a slight rebellion against an implication in the Bishop's words.

"But is it fair," he asked, "to put the burden upon

me? I have not had anything to do with this money; I am not one of Templeton's associates. I suppose that a man, in a measure, makes himself. Should not Templeton, then, stand the consequences of what he has done?"

"In such a case as this," replied the Bishop, "we do not apply a logic so cold. Templeton will reform. His life will be saved from ruin, and his mother and sister will be able to hold up their heads in the community in which they have lived all their lives."

Guthrie in his heart did not believe in Templeton's reformation, but he was willing to put that phase of the matter aside and confine himself to his own personal responsibility in the case.

"Would you be willing," he asked, "for me to speak to you as I should to a man of my own age and position?"

"I would not have you do otherwise," replied the Bishop with his kindly smile. "I wish to put this question upon a basis wholly fair."

Guthrie's glance wandered, as the Bishop's had done, to the silver river and the rim of brown hills, but came back and met those of the old man.

"We have spoken only of Templeton and his family," he said, "and we have disregarded my own position in this affair. Suppose, we speak of myself as we should of a third person. I will admit that the press is often sensational, that it prints some things that are bad and more that are frivolous. But there are also bad and frivolous lawyers and physicians and—pardon me—clergymen. These things do not alter the fact that the press has a duty to perform—to narrate faithfully to the world the public events that are occurring each day, and, if it fail in any particular, when the information is

in its possession, is it not as much at fault as a lawyer who betrays his client or a clergyman who neglects the moral welfare of his people? Should there be one moral standard for the church and a lower one for the press? Did I not take an unsworn oath when I entered the employ of the *Times* to serve it to the best of my power, and should I not be breaking that oath if I failed to send to it the news of Templeton's defalcation? In my profession, loyalty to those whom we serve is the heart of our code of honour, and I am proud that it is so. It enables us to endure much, to scorn the obloquy that we know is undeserved, to follow with zeal a vocation so necessary to our world, and yet you ask me to violate it merely to oblige some one."

Guthrie's face flushed slightly. He took the loftiest view of his calling, and the Bishop had asked him to speak as one man would to another of like age and position. It often seemed to him that people of the general world—"outsiders" he called them—were obstinate in not recognising these duties of a newspaper; they would persist in regarding it as something which should stroke and soothe the public and make it feel good, and would ignore its true and only functions—those of the historian and the critic. The Bishop, a man of the noblest character, seemed to him to typify this view—a crude one, he considered it—and again he felt a sense of rebellion that one of such high qualities should consider a young reporter's moral obligation less than his own; in fact, something not to be reckoned with in the scheme of the world's work.

The Bishop shook his head, as if in dissent, but his blue eyes shone with a benevolent gaze. He laid his hand lightly and for a moment on Guthrie's shoulder.

The act was paternal, and Guthrie recognised in it the fact that the clergyman, despite his wish to speak from a plane of perfect equality in age and otherwise, could not do so—a long habit of thought would not permit it.

“I honour the quality in your character that makes you speak as you do,” said the Bishop, “but I think it comes from a mistaken preconception of the world and one’s duty to it. It is the fault of youth to generalise too much, to think that no rule has an exception, and we find later that the world does not work that way. We of the church, the smallest part of whose duty is the sermons we preach, best know it. I am an old man, and I tell you that it is better to spare a family than to send a despatch to a newspaper.”

“But should you tell me that?” exclaimed Guthrie. “Mine is a public service, made so by universal necessity and universal consent. I have a managing editor back there in the city who is my general. He is a machine; when he comes on duty at eight o’clock, he leaves all human emotion behind him, not to be taken up again until the paper goes to press again at three o’clock in the morning—that is why he is such a valuable managing editor. He is exactly like a general in a real campaign, marshalling his forces for the most effective exertion of strength. Now, here am I, a sentinel at an advanced post. I have seen something more than suspicious, and you ask me to say nothing about it to my general—in fact, you ask me to let a deserter slip by because it will save the feelings of his family!”

The Bishop felt a faint sense of irritation, though he concealed it from Guthrie. The newspapers of his youth had been mere personal or political organs, devoted to the interests of a man or a party, and having

their relations with the public only through that man or party. He could not grow used to the new view, the view held by a new generation, that a newspaper should be a prompt and accurate chronicler of public events, turning aside for nobody.

"I think you are mistaken," he said, "in looking upon yourself as, in some sense, a judge."

"Not as a judge," replied Guthrie, "but as a clerk of the court. It is for me to report to the judge all things that come within my province, and then the judge, whoever he may be, can take what action he thinks fit."

"But you forget," said the Bishop earnestly, "that the newspaper is, in its inception at least, a private enterprise, and that the materials of its trade are human beings. The printed word that you write so easily and forget so quickly may wreck a life. It is, therefore, a power which should be used sparingly. I know of none other in which self-restraint is worth so much."

"I concede all you say," replied Guthrie, "but I do not think it touches the main issue. Your criticism applies only to the newspapers which turn aside from their duty, which exaggerate or tell untruths or distort from the true proportion, and, above all, I do not think it applies to my own personal responsibility in this case. I serve a company which, in its turn, is supposed to serve the public, and my loyalty is due directly to the company. I do not feel that I can betray it."

The Bishop was still standing by the window, tapping lightly on the pane with his forefinger, a troubled look in his blue eyes. In his heart, he thought Guthrie a very stubborn young man and a creator of false issues. And his sense of irritation was increased by the memory of the home that he had left, the grief and terror of the

mother and sister. These were the things that dwelled in his mind.

The brown hills melted away in the twilight, the silver river became faint, and night sank down over the little capital. The Bishop's face was in the shadow as he turned again to Guthrie.

"If you refuse our request," he said, and for the first time there was a note of sternness in his voice, "yours will be the responsibility for ruining a home."

Guthrie flushed, but he did not retreat.

"It is such a charge as that which I and any one in my profession who serves it well resents most," he replied. "Should I be controlled by sentiment or by duty? If I am faithless in this instance, why should I not be equally so in others, and who is to judge where the limit shall be? If the claim of Templeton to suppression of his crime be good, then the claims of all others who commit crime are equally good, and I, in this case at least, should become an accessory. Mine would be the sin of omission which differs only in degree from that of commission."

"You think of yourself only," said the Bishop, and the note of reproof in his voice grew stronger. "It is of your own career and of strengthening a particular profession, a desire that it shall acquire a reputation for omniscience, that you are thinking, not of a family's honour and the forgiveness which the Book tells us we must have for the weak and the erring."

It was said of the Bishop that he could have his stern moments, that he could become terrible in his wrath, and now Guthrie saw the suppressed fire in his eyes. But the discipline of years, the code of a profession as stern and exacting as the military, lay heavily upon him;

he felt that, if he yielded to the Bishop's request, he must become a traitor and regard himself as one.

Yet he valued the friendship of this man, and he was not willing to lose it.

"I think that you do me an injustice," he said; "yours—again pardon me—is the hasty view. It is no pleasure to me, on the contrary, it is a pain, to send a report of Templeton's crime. No man of the right kind in my profession ever rejoices over having to do such a thing; but we cannot escape it. We are the chroniclers of the world's daily doings and that, like history, is to some extent the record of its crimes and follies; but we do not commit the evil, we merely state that it exists—that is, we tell where the poison lies."

The Bishop turned away again and looked through the window. A tear glittered on his eyelid, but Guthrie did not see it. The silver river shone through the dusk, and the electric lights twinkled like stars. The mother and sister were still in the Bishop's mind; he was faithful to them.

"It seems to me," he said, "that too many systems have been invented since my youth. We have grown too fond of classifying and generalising. I find something cold and hard in the youth of to-day. If society is to be organised into a single merciless machine, each wheel and cog doing an exact part and no more, then something human has gone out of it, and I, for one, prefer the old to the new. I should wish to have back again the editor who was swayed by human considerations, even if he were selfish and a place-seeker, and to lose him of to-day who, like your managing editor as you describe him, becomes from 8 P. M. to 3 A. M.—a metallic creature, wound up like a watch."

"The more nearly we reach that ideal, the more nearly my profession realises perfection," said Guthrie, "because it is something apart, and it is necessary for those who serve it to suppress their weaker emotions. And often it is hard to do it. Templeton's mother and sister will grieve, and so shall I—but I am helpless. It is he, not I, who will make them grieve."

"I shall leave it to your conscience," said the Bishop. His mild eyes were full of reproach and pain. He started toward the table to take his hat and cane, but Guthrie was before him, glad to serve an old man whom he respected so much.

"I hope to hear to-morrow that you have suppressed this news, my son," said the Bishop as he went out.

But they met by chance in the street two hours later, and the Bishop's look was questioning.

"I am just coming from the telegraph office," said Guthrie. "I have sent the *Times* a thousand words about Templeton."

The Bishop frowned, and turned away without a word. Guthrie raised his head, and walked on toward the Capitol.

CHAPTER II

ON COMMON GROUND

It was near the end of the twilight hour, and over the river and the hills hung a hazy dusk, through which the walls of the Capitol, yellow with age, showed but dimly. No lights shone at any of its windows, and the ancient trees in the grounds waved solemn branches. It was a small and primitive Capitol, built by the State in its earliest youth when there was little money to spare, but it had both beauty and nobility, and it yet resisted all efforts to replace it. An old State senator had wisely said, "You may erect a Capitol very much costlier, very much larger, and very much uglier, and then make in it very much worse laws than we do here," and his words carried conviction.

Guthrie looked up at the building with a certain reverence and pride. Like all citizens of the State, he was intensely proud of his birth in it, and the antiquated structure, where so many young men, afterward famous in the larger arena of the nation, had made their maiden speeches, was to him full of associations and the charm of history and poetry.

It was with such thoughts as these that he sought to detach himself from the severe test through which he had gone. It cut him to the heart to disappoint the Bishop, one of the best of men and his friend; but he felt that he had done his duty though he would find only

a minority taking the same view. For Templeton, he yet had little pity; his disgrace was sure to come soon or late—it had merely fallen to Guthrie's lot to record it, as it might have fallen to the lot of somebody else. But thoughts of the mother and sister would come, nevertheless, and, turning away from the Capitol, he went to his hotel. "I need lights and the sound of human voices," he thought, "and I shall go where they are."

Mrs. Senator Dennison was to give one of her semi-monthly receptions that evening, and it was sure to be attended largely, because Mrs. Dennison was not only a power socially and politically, but the house over which this handsome and tactful woman presided was the pleasantest in the little city. John Dennison was not a State senator, which is important in itself, but a United States Senator—a far grander thing. An old man yet fresh and robust, with a long and distinguished public career in the State, he had been elected at the preceding session of the Legislature to the United States Senate; but his young wife still maintained a home in the little capital in which she had been born and where she was, with the new prestige of her husband, a social queen. Here wisdom went hand in hand with inclination, because, as her husband was the creation of the Legislature, and both he and she would certainly wish him to be recreated at the end of his six years, it was well to turn constantly a smiling face upon the creating power. The old senator, with all his rugged ability and practical judgment, did not know how much his young wife helped him in the building of his political fortune.

Guthrie was sure of a welcome at the Dennison home. The press in his State was not sensational, and its relations with public men were friendly and

pleasant; moreover, the *Times* was a power, and its correspondent at the capital was not a man to be neglected. It was his second "term" there. At his first, he had been but a boy, and many of the members wondered that the *Times* should send one so young to represent it in a position of such importance; but Guthrie's dignity, judgment, and absolute honesty soon convinced them that the editor of the *Times* knew what he was about when he despatched him to the capital.

Guthrie put on his evening clothes and a light overcoat, and walked out in the frosty air toward the Dennison home, which was on the other side of the river, though but a short distance away. He stopped a few moments at the middle of the long bridge, and looked far up the broad, deep river—a sheet of molten silver in the dusk. On the left, in the cemetery at the top of the high cliff, the marble monuments erected to the State's illustrious dead gleamed snow-white; often Guthrie had walked there, and oftenest he paused before the shaft to those fallen in the Mexican War, where the poet had first read the solemn and famous line: "The muffled drum's sad roll has beat."

Guthrie's State pride swelled afresh; it always seemed to him that his State was full of poetry and romance, and most of all now, in the night, with the deep river flowing under him, the white monuments covering the hills, and the lumberman on his raft in the middle of the stream singing softly some melancholy ballad of the distant mountains from which he and the river came. He forgot, for the moment, all about Templeton and Mrs. Dennison, too. There was a strain of sentiment in his nature which perhaps kept

him from being the lawyer that he had wanted to be, and turned him into the newspaper man that he was.

But the present soon came back, and turning away from the hills and the river, he was in five minutes at Mrs. Dennison's door, where lights and voices alike were plentiful.

"We are glad to see you Mr. Guthrie," said Mrs. Dennison. "Of course we all bow to the press."

"And not to me in my humble personal capacity."

"We value you, too, for your own sake," she said.

She was tall, blonde, and smiling, a woman of will, capacity, and thirty years. Beside her stood the governor's wife, Mrs. Hastings, who was yet a girl—Paul Hastings was the youngest governor in the history of the State, and he had married only a little before his election—and beyond her was a vista of other girls, all with the fresh complexions and delicate features which belong to the women of this State.

Lucy Hastings liked Guthrie—he had written many kind things in the *Times* about Paul, and she greeted him with the warmth and feelings of her youth.

"We have missed you, Mr. Guthrie," she said, "Haven't we, Clarice?"

Clarice, otherwise Miss Ransome, was the first girl on her right, and, when the governor's wife appealed to her for confirmation, Guthrie looked curiously at her to see if it would come. Once before he had met Miss Ransome—the daughter of a rich man in the metropolis of the State, she was now on a visit to her friend, Lucy Hastings, the Governor's wife. Tall, composed, and with a face full of strength and character, she smiled slightly.

"Why do you appeal to me, Lucy," she asked, "can't you speak for yourself?"

Guthrie was disappointed. She seemed to him at their first meeting somewhat cold and reserved, perhaps a little superior; but this bearing attracted his mind unconsciously, telling him that a shell of some kind usually enclosed whatever was of greatest value. It was such a phase of her character that induced him now to stay by her as long as she would let him—Mrs. Hastings had turned away to assist Mrs. Dennison in the reception of her guests and there was opportunity.

"You can see here to-night what a strange medley we are in this State, Miss Ransome," he said.

She glanced over the crowded drawing-room, and the light of interest appeared in her eyes. Guthrie spoke the truth: many phases of human character were represented there. The State presents sharp contrasts. In the East are the untamed mountains which suddenly drop down in the West into a vast valley, one of the richest and most beautiful in the world; and the people share the qualities of the particular soil on which they dwell. But here, in the little capital, they met on equal terms, politically and socially. Every member of the Legislature was entitled, by unwritten law, to all the hospitality of the little city.

"Who is the singular tall man with the white spots in his hair?" asked Miss Ransome.

He of whom she spoke was leaning against the wall, and Miss Ransome was not the only one who looked at him with curiosity. He was over six feet four inches in height, as straight and slender as a hickory-tree, and his long, coal-black hair had turned white in irregular patches not larger than a silver dollar. His face was

straight, long, and smoothly shaven, his cheek-bones high like those of an Indian, and his black eyes wary and restless like those of a hunter who watches for hidden danger. The tails of a long, rusty black frock-coat fell below his knees.

Guthrie followed Miss Ransome's look, and he smiled slightly, although the smile was sympathetic.

"That," he replied, "is the Reverend Zedekiah Pike, of Sloane County, a State senator from the mountains, and my very good friend, I am glad to say. At least he preaches sometimes in his native mountains, although he is not ordained—a minister by profession cannot be a member of our Legislature, you know, and he is also, so I am told, the chief champion of the Pikes in their long feud with the Dilgers."

"A feudist in such a house as this? How strange!" exclaimed Miss Ransome, her eyes shining with interest. "Perhaps he has a pistol with him now!"

"I have no doubt that those long coat-tails hide the butt of a seven-shot self-acting revolver," replied Guthrie—"but don't be afraid, Miss Ransome; Mr. Pike is as gentle as a lamb, he isn't going to shoot anybody here."

"Will he talk to women?" asked Miss Ransome.

"Just wait a minute and see," replied Guthrie, and he crossed the room to Mr. Pike.

The tall mountaineer smiled when the young correspondent spoke to him—Guthrie had printed a picture of Mr. Pike in his newspaper, and under it had appeared the flattering line: "The leader of the mountain delegation in the Senate."

"A lady from the city wishes to meet you, Mr. Pike," he said. "Come, I will take you to her."

The tall mountaineer neither hesitated nor showed embarrassment, but followed Guthrie without a word, and was presented duly to Miss Ransome. Clarice, who knew as little of the portion of her own State from which Mr. Pike came as she did of Afghanistan, was surprised to find him not awkward, but, on the contrary, composed and dignified. He said "yes ma'am" and "no ma'am" to her, because he had been taught to say them always to women; but his manner was not one with which anybody could trifle.

Clarice felt a pleasant excitement—educated abroad and knowing nothing of Mr. Pike's mountains, she imagined much. She was talking here in this brilliant drawing-room to a man who not only carried a revolver in his hip pocket, but could shoot and had shot bullets from it at human beings who were also firing bullets at him. But his face was singularly calm and lamb-like as he talked to her with his drawl and clipped accent.

"I hear you are the leader of the mountain delegation, Mr. Pike," she said.

"That's just one of Billy Guthrie's yarns, ma'am," he drawled. "These newspaper fellers have got to fill their columns, and I 'low they find it pow'ful hard sleddin' sometimes, ma'am."

He put his hand familiarly and affectionately on Guthrie's shoulder as he spoke.

"But we don't quarrel with 'em when they stretch the blanket to say nice things about us, ma'am," he continued, "it's when they whack our speeches that we say the freedom of the press is turnin' into license."

"You don't differ from other people," said Miss Ransome.

"No, ma'am," replied the mountaineer. "You find human natur' the same on all kinds of soil."

Miss Ransome tried to draw him out, to make him talk of his own people and himself, but here she struck the obstacle that all must meet who seek to explore as she did. The mountaineer immediately became reserved and cold. He resented any suspicion of a patronising kindness or curiosity, however well-meant, and Guthrie, who heard and observed all, smiled a little. He had seen much of the mountaineers, and he had penetrated their shell; he knew their bitter anger at the assumed and real superiority of the lowlands, and he knew how deeply their members in the Legislature felt it when they were taunted with representing the "pauper" counties—that is, counties that paid into the State treasury very much less revenue than they drew out of it, which was true of every mountain county in the State.

Miss Ransome could not account for the change in the mountaineer's manner, but Guthrie knowing the trouble quietly led the talk to other subjects, and Mr. Pike became once more his genial but dignified self. When Mrs. Hastings took him away presently, Clarice said to Guthrie:

"What a singular man!"

"Yes," replied Guthrie, "and as proud as Lucifer! You will hear of him before this session is over. I am glad that you are beginning to find your own State interesting."

"I never said that it wasn't."

"No, but you looked it. Now here is another man, as marked a character as Mr. Pike; he comes neither from the mountains nor from our famous lowland val-

ley, but from the hill country that slopes off into the southwest. I am speaking of Senator Cobb, the big man over there."

Mr. Cobb, a member of the State Senate, was not quite so tall as Mr. Pike, but he was much broader and heavier, and he, too, was smoothly shaven, and a pair of mild and child-like blue eyes looked forth from his ruddy and massive features. Thick snow-white hair brushed straight back was the crown of a striking face.

"Another friend of mine, Miss Ransome," said Guthrie. "Senator Cobb is the connecting link between the rich lowlands and the poor highlands, and he is the enemy of all trusts and monopolies. He is the most absolutely honest man in both public and private life that I have ever known."

"You are always speaking of the honesty of these men, Mr. Guthrie," said Miss Ransome. "I had the impression that our public life was very corrupt; I know that it is thought so in society and in Europe."

Guthrie laughed.

"Europe and society in this country," he replied, "know very little about our public men, and they are misled by sensational newspapers and that absolute freedom of speech among us which tends to exaggeration. I think that we have more honesty and patriotism than you can find in parliamentary bodies anywhere else in the world."

Miss Ransome was silent, but she was not convinced. It was almost her first contact with the public life of her native State, and she had been taught to believe that it was corrupt, largely because public office was not the perquisite of wealth and birth, and, naturally,

bad manners were associated in her mind with bad morals.

But, when she talked with Senator Cobb, who, she knew, had been abused much by the opposition, she began to allow for the exaggeration and the vague charges so common in American life. This man's gaze was straight and open. She had never looked into eyes more honest. His dignity and the courtesy that he showed to women were equal to those of Mr. Pike, but, obviously, he was of a higher type than the mountaineer. He showed more culture, more acquaintance with the larger world, and a greater grasp of its problems.

"Do you know what feature of this gathering impresses me most?" she said somewhat later to Guthrie.

"No, and I cannot guess."

"It is the size of the men. It seems to me that all of them are over six feet tall. I have seen the French Chambers, and I have seen the English Parliament, and, after them, I seem to have come here upon a race of giants—physically at least."

Clarice Ransome was deeply interested—more so than she would have confessed to Guthrie. She had been only a week at the capital, and only three months from Europe, arriving with many prejudices and a view which she had begun to believe was somewhat narrow. It now seemed to her that much of the so-called cultivation and refinement that she had learned abroad had in it the touch of effeminacy, and that was repellent to her.

More than once her glance strayed to Guthrie, who was now on the other side of the room, talking to Senator Cobb, and she did not know whether she liked

him; but she could not help noticing his fine, eager face, handsome with the glow of youth, and she felt, too, that he had communicated to her some of his own enthusiasm and interest in everything about him.

But Guthrie was unconscious of her glances. He drifted in a few moments from Senator Cobb to Jimmie Warfield, the youthful representative of one of the metropolitan districts. Warfield put his hand on Guthrie's shoulder and drew him to one side.

"Billy," he said. "I've heard a tale about you and Templeton. I hope it isn't true."

Guthrie's form stiffened a little. Here was the issue again and he would have to face criticism by one of his best friends. But he did not seek to avoid it.

"I suppose you have heard that I sent the *Times* an account of Templeton's defalcation," he replied. "Well it's true."

"I don't see how you could do it, Billy," Warfield said. "I am sure I'd have skipped it if I had been in your place."

"It's one of the things that I'm in this city for," replied Guthrie, and he walked away, not willing to discuss it any more.

Warfield, who was a tender-hearted man, ready at any time to sacrifice himself for a friend, gazed after him. "I couldn't have done it!" he murmured.

Guthrie knew Warfield's thoughts, and they troubled him. He believed that men of the world in constant touch with public affairs ought to understand his point of view, and he foresaw hostility to himself because they did not. He was not by nature of a belligerent temper; he preferred the friendship of everybody, and he enjoyed life in the little capital. He did not wish

to be spoken of as the man who had exposed Templeton's mother and sister to disgrace, but his mind returned to his original position as the right one. He wondered what Clarice Ransome would think of his activity, and he was angry with himself for trying to guess her opinion. A woman would be sure to take the sentimental view! But when he looked at her face, and studied the firm curve of her jaw and her calm, strong eyes, he was not so sure; neither was it a discovered fact that women were softer-hearted in such matters than men.

Guthrie left early, and as he passed into the vestibule, he found Senator Cobb also with his hat and overcoat, and the sight of the Senator's broad, bland face gave him an idea. Mr. Cobb's family were not in the capital and he need not hurry, so Guthrie proposed that they walk together.

"Certainly, my son," replied the Senator, who called all young men whom he knew well "my son." "Our ways are the same, anyhow. What a glorious night! I'm past sixty, but this keen frosty air puts the blood of thirty in my veins."

After that they walked in silence for a while, the old Senator enjoying the cold air and the light but fresh breeze from the hills. He was a man of immense physical vigour, one who had been all his life close to the soil, and Guthrie noticed with a certain pleasure the free, vigorous swing of his body. They were near the bridge before the Senator, taking thought of his young companion's silence, glanced keenly at his face.

"What's the trouble, Billy?" he asked, putting his hand kindly upon Guthrie's shoulder.

"I've had to do something to-day that I found unpleasant," replied Guthrie.

"What is uncommon in that?"

"But this was more so than usual," replied Guthrie with a slight laugh. Then he told the story of Templeton, his crime, and the telegram about it. Mr. Cobb listened with attention, and they were almost across the bridge before the account was finished. Then Guthrie waited to hear what he would say, but the Senator was silent for a minute or two.

"You were right to do it," he said at last, "although I should not have done it myself."

He would say no more, but Guthrie noticed that his manner lost nothing of its warmth and friendliness; instead, it became more fatherly.

"Who is the Miss Ransome, to whom you introduced me?" he asked. "A rich man's daughter, is she not?"

"Yes," replied Guthrie, "and she has just returned to this country, after being educated in Europe."

"I thought so," was the Senator's brief comment, and he added, after a moment's thought:

"We must Americanise her."

CHAPTER III

A SESSION OF THE HOUSE

GUTHRIE was early in his attendance at the next morning's session of the Legislature, and but few members were present when he arrived. It was a cold day, and the boughs of the trees on the state-house lawn crackled in the dry, bitter wind; but inside all was snug and warm. The vast fireplaces, built before the days of steam-pipes, were filled with hickory logs, which, under the great blaze, kept up a crackling fire, like the popping of small shot.

It was his custom to go first into the House, where his desk, like that of the other correspondents, stood at the foot of the Speaker's dais, facing the members, and he did not depart from it this morning. The members greeted him in pleasant fashion. Somehow they always glided into a great family there, and the correspondents were looked upon, too, in a semidetached way as members, with certain obligations due to fellowship in the band. For these reasons, Guthrie always found it hard to criticise men for whom he might have the greatest personal liking, save when they were Republican; in this, a partisan State, it was deemed not only a right but a duty to attack the politics of the other side: a man praised by one of the opposite party would have feared treachery.

After the familiar words, Guthrie took off his over-

coat, and warmed his fingers by the great open fire. The wine of life was full of sparkle that morning, and he looked forward to a day's good work. The Speaker himself, Mr. Carton, a young man not over thirty, entered at that moment, and, like Guthrie, warmed his hands before the great blaze.

"Do you expect anything lively to-day, Mr. Carton?" asked Guthrie.

The Speaker's face clouded a little.

"I'm afraid Pursley is going to call up the 'United' to-day," he replied. "He's loaded for a big speech, and you know that demagogic plea of his is bound to count with lots of people up in the City and throughout the State, too."

Guthrie glanced toward the eastern side of the house near the great window where Pursley was already in his seat. The "United" was merely a short term for the United Electric Gas, Power, Light, and Heating Bill with which Pursley had come down from the "City"—and "City" here meant the metropolis of the State, which is six or seven times the size of any other place in it, and therefore looms large in the affairs of the Legislature.

"Is there no way to head him off?" asked Guthrie.

"None whatever," replied the Speaker; "the bill has advanced so far that he has the right to call it up, and well—there's Pursley—he's as obstinate as a mule and as thick-skinned as a rhinoceros: besides he knows what he wants, and that's always no small advantage."

Guthrie glanced again at Pursley, the gentleman from the Third Legislative District in the City. Pursley's face was bent over his desk as he examined some papers, but his features were not hidden. They were

heavy and coarse, but the small, close-set eyes did not lack intelligence, even though the intelligence in this case might be classified under the unfavourable name of "cunning," and the long jaw and thick neck denoted obstinacy.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Carton," said Guthrie. "It will be a costly fight to you to keep him down."

"But you'll give us all the help you can, Billy?" said Carton.

"Oh, yes, of course!" replied Guthrie.

Other members from the "City" were entering and taking their seats, and Guthrie regarded them with a disapproving eye. It seemed to him that the city members, with one or two exceptions, were on a lower moral and intellectual plane than those from the country. The country members, whether right or wrong in their ideas, were truly representative of the people who sent them, while those from the city seemed to have behind them some organisation or agency, vague but powerful.

"I wish I knew who your best friends are," said Guthrie to himself as he looked at Pursley.

His face brightened when Jimmy Warfield, who also represented a "city" district, entered. Jimmy was exceptional; no one could look into his open face and say that he was not straightforward and honest. His friendships were with the other members rather than with those from the city. Warfield caught Guthrie's eyes, and nodded. Then he took his seat two desks away from Pursley, and began to write.

A quorum was soon present, and the Speaker called the House to order. It is the custom always to open the sessions with prayer, and as there is no regular

chaplain, a visiting minister or one from the capital officiates. This morning the minister did not enter until the last moment, and it was the Bishop. Guthrie looked up and met his eye. It was grave and reproachful, and Guthrie flushed a little, but he returned the old man's gaze steadily.

All stood, and the Bishop prayed for the blessing of God upon those who were assembled there to make laws for the people. His fine voice filled the great room, and Guthrie, looking at his face, admired, as he had admired so many times before, the nobility, dignity, and charity of his features.

The Bishop after the prayer paused a few moments by the fire before going out into the cold. The mails from the metropolis bringing the morning's important newspapers always arrive at this moment, and the boy came in with them, distributing to each member and to each correspondent his share. One of the members courteously handed his *Times* to the Bishop.

"Perhaps Europe has furnished us with a new war-cloud in the Balkans," he said.

The Bishop smiled, and opened his newspaper, but he did not look for the "war-cloud in the Balkans." His mind was upon a thousand-word despatch sent the night before by young Mr. Guthrie, whose action he could not approve. Guthrie, from his desk, was watching him closely, and he saw him turn page after page until he came to the last, and then go back to the first page, scrutinising them all again. The Bishop's look of disapproval changed to one of perplexity and then to one of relief, though still retaining a tinge of perplexity. He folded the paper, and handed it back to the obliging member with a quiet "thank you;" then

he walked over to the correspondent and whispered, "may I see you a moment, Mr. Guthrie?"

Guthrie arose at once, and went with the Bishop to the fireplace, where they were, in a sense, detached from the business of the House.

"I have looked carefully through the *Times* for the news about young Templeton, and I do not find it," said the Bishop. "What does it mean, Mr. Guthrie? You told me that you sent the despatch."

"I told you the truth," replied Guthrie, meeting the Bishop's eye unflinchingly.

"I never for a moment doubted that," said the Bishop. "I wish to know, not because it is my affair, but because of our previous conversation, why it was not published."

"I suppose they did not think it worth while," replied Guthrie vaguely.

The Bishop shook his head.

"I do not think that is the reason, Mr. Guthrie," he said. "If you described your managing editor to me correctly, and I am sure you did, he never would have left it out. I think you are the cause of its omission."

Guthrie flushed, and looked embarrassed. The Bishop waited, and Guthrie saw that he expected him to speak.

"When I sent my despatch, I forwarded another telegram also," he said reluctantly. "It was a personal one to Mr. Stetson, our editor—there was a chance that he might be in the city—asking him to suppress my news, if he could."

"Well?" said the Bishop.

"It seems," continued Guthrie, "that he was there

—and suppressed the news. Mr. Stetson is the editor, and, if he wanted to do it, he could—he's the judge of his duty to the public."

There was a new warmth in the Bishop's tone when he spoke again, and he put his hand on Guthrie's shoulder in a fatherly manner.

"Mr. Guthrie," he said, "last night I thought you hard, even cruel, but I change my opinion to-day. Why didn't you tell me that you had sent this personal telegram to your editor?"

Guthrie hesitated.

"Because I thought I ought to be judged according to my conception of my duty," he replied at length, "and not by some qualifying action. And then—the chances were at least five to one that Mr. Stetson would not be there."

The Bishop looked puzzled, then smiled.

"Billy," he said "you are a most obstinate boy. But let us be friends again."

"If you will permit it," said Guthrie.

The Bishop patted him on the shoulder, and in a few moments left the house. Guthrie returned to his desk, and resumed his notes. His mind was easier, but he feared that he had shown what might at least be called an amiable weakness. He had not looked at the newspaper, but he had known from the expression on the Bishop's face as he glanced down the columns that the despatch was suppressed. He thought of Templeton's mother and sister—they were saved from grief and shame, but only for the present. The crash was sure to come, and would be all the greater from the delay and he was not convinced that he had done right.

But his thoughts soon turned from Templeton to another and vital question.

The session was not an hour old before he noticed that it was under the influence of a suppressed but keen excitement. Although the House was droning out nothing but routine business, the members were closely watching the Speaker, who apparently was unconcerned, his left hand lightly resting on the handle of the gavel, and his right hand turning the pages of some letters which he was reading, seemingly with more interest than he gave to the House.

Guthrie, even if he had not been warned would have known that something was going to happen. Long habit had made him familiar with these periods of expectancy in a crowd—the decrease of noise, the leaning forward of heads and the exchange of glances. He looked across at Pursley, but the “Champion of the people”—as he often called himself—was still bending his heavy face over legal-looking documents that he read attentively.

Guthrie concluded that Pursley was not yet ready to spring his mine, and decided to go into the Senate for a while.

“If anything happens while I’m in the other chamber, let me know, won’t you?” he said to Charlton, the correspondent who sat next to him.

“All right,” replied Charlton, “but I don’t see why you want to waste time over there; nothing ever happens in the Senate.”

Guthrie crossed the hall and joined the older and more dignified body. The change in atmosphere was apparent at once. The House has over a hundred members, the Senate less than forty, and the smaller num-

ber began to wear more the aspect of a club. Besides brown hair was predominant in the House, gray hair here; men spoke quickly there, slowly here. Old Senator Wells from the mountains had taken his boots off to ease his aged feet and his gray home-knit, yarn socks, undoubtedly the work of his wife, were exposed for all to see. There were only eight Republican senators—too small a number to be troublesome—and while rated severely in speeches they were privately great favourites, because they had nothing to ask and nothing to expect from the administration or the majority; therefore they gave no trouble.

Guthrie took the vacant seat beside Senator Wells.

"Any news here this morning, Mr. Wells?" he asked.

"News, my boy?" replied the old senator with a soundless little laugh. "You shouldn't expect news here. Why the Senate's too respectable for that. You must go back to the House if you want it."

"Oh! I don't know," said Guthrie. "I thought that perhaps the Republican minority was trying some wicked scheme in here."

"We can't, we are surrounded by the enemy," replied Mr. Wells, waving his hand at the long array of Democratic senators.

They were passing local bills, of interest only to particular members, and Senator Cobb moved into the vacant seat on the other side of Mr. Wells.

"I hear that there is going to be a stir in the House to-day," he said to Guthrie.

"Yes," replied Guthrie, "Pursley expects to call up the 'United' bill and to attack the Speaker because he smothered it so long in the Committee."

"I'm sorry Carton did that," said Senator Cobb. "I like Carton and I don't like Pursley, but Pursley is right in this matter; that bill hits at the corporations and it ought to pass."

Guthrie said nothing because they were old men and of official position, but he could not agree with Mr. Cobb.

"Carton is going to find himself in serious trouble," continued the senator.

"That ought to gratify Pursley," commented Guthrie.

He spoke with some resentment because he liked and admired Carton, and he did not wish to see a young man with such fine qualities and prospects pulled down by a Pursley.

"How will the *Times* stand on the bill?" asked Mr. Cobb of Guthrie.

"I think it will oppose it," replied Guthrie.

"Your owner, of course, has a lot of gas and electric light stocks," said Senator Wells, half in jest, half in earnest.

Guthrie flushed.

"Not that I know of," he replied. "I don't think he paid any attention to the bill until I wrote to him at length about it, and described what I thought to be its nature. I think I can rightfully claim the credit or discredit of the *Times'* opposition."

"I am sorry, my son," said Senator Cobb. "City life has influenced you without your knowing it. This bill ought to pass."

Guthrie said no more on the subject but listened to the old men as they discussed it. His visit in the Senate was really to sound the senators in regard to the

bill, and he found that a majority there as in the House were in favour of it. He had hoped that, if Carton let the bill pass in the House, it might be defeated in the Senate, and thus the purpose would be achieved without expense to the Speaker; but it required only a few minutes to tell him the plan was useless. The Senate was with the House, and the battle would have to be fought out in the latter.

He arose presently and went back into the House where dull business was still going on, but the lobbies had filled up in his absence. Mrs. Dennison, the governor's wife, and their friends were there. The rumour that it was going to be an interesting session of the House had spread somehow in the capital, and visitors could never afford to miss anything of that nature.

Mrs. Dennison sat with Miss Ransome on her right and Miss Pelham, a visitor from the largest city of the rich lowland region, on her left. Guthrie saw the Speaker glance at Miss Pelham, then smile and bow and he felt sorry for Carton whom all the capital knew to be in love with Mary Pelham. But the Speaker was a self-made man and yet poor, while Miss Pelham was the daughter of a great land-owner, and her family had been furnishing governors and United States senators for three generations. Moreover, Guthrie knew what the young Speaker would soon have to face.

His own glance passed soon from Miss Pelham to Miss Ransome, to whom he bowed and from whom he received a slight bow in return. But her face was cold and not without a supercilious touch. The interest that he had been able to rouse the night before in her about her native State, its people and its ways, seemed

to have passed. "Doubtless," reflected Guthrie, "much of this must seem commonplace and dull to her." But he made the angry addition: "She should like it because it is our own people—and her's."

He folded up his notes and joined the visitors in the lobby.

"We hear that there is likely to be a scene, Mr. Guthrie, is it true?" asked Miss Ransome.

"I should hardly call it a 'scene,'" replied Guthrie quietly.

She flushed a little, then laughed lightly.

"I accept the correction," she said. "I did not know the right word. I merely meant that something stirring is going to happen—so we heard. What is it?"

"Do you see the heavy-faced man over there near the east window?" said Guthrie. "Well, that's Pursley; he's one of the members from the city districts. He is expected to make a vicious attack to-day on the Speaker."

He glanced from Miss Ransome to Mary Pelham, when he said "the Speaker." Miss Pelham moved slightly but showed no other emotion and inquired in an even voice:

"Why should he attack Mr. Carton and what has Mr. Carton to fear from an attack by him?"

Guthrie was attached to Carton and he thought to serve him. She must know what was threatening him and it was best for her to be prepared. He might be able to create a prepossession in Carton's favour.

"There is a powerful organisation behind this bill," he replied, "all the more powerful because it is vague and in a way secret. So far, Mr. Carton has been its

most successful opponent, and—well—Pursley will leave the inference that Mr. Carton is interested.”

An indignant flush reddened the cheeks of Mary Pelham.

“No one could believe such a thing of Mr. Carton!” she exclaimed.

“Not I, certainly,” replied Guthrie, and then he added with perhaps less emphasis: “nor you, nor anyone else who knows the Speaker, but there is a power in reiteration, an incessant implication—implication of the light, indirect kind that seems unintentional. It creates an atmosphere, so to speak.”

“I thought you told me that political life here was not corrupt, or at least not more corrupt than it is elsewhere!” said Clarice Ransome, looking at him with bright, ironical eyes.

“It is not,” replied Guthrie with conviction. “There is merely plainer speaking and more of it. Nor does it follow because a charge has been made that it is true.”

“I cannot believe any ill of Mr. Carton,” said Mrs. Dennison.

“A more honest man never breathed the breath of life,” said Guthrie.

He glanced again at Mary Pelham, but seemingly she took no note of his zealous defence, gazing calmly over the rows of members.

The Speaker from his desk looked at her again, but her eyes did not meet his and he turned back in disappointment to his work.

Guthrie was watching Pursley who now glanced up frequently from his papers and always at the Speaker. These movements, so Guthrie knew, foreboded action, and the strained and silent attention of the House

showed that the members knew it, too. At this moment a thin, quiet man, his face blue with close shaving, entered and modestly took a seat in the farthest corner of the lobby. It was Mr. Caius Marcellus Harlow who was not attached to the Legislature in any capacity, but who was a frequent attendant upon its sessions. Guthrie sought to read Mr. Harlow's face and to tell what his interest in pending events might be, but the result was nothing. Then he turned his attention back to the Speaker.

He admired Carton's coolness and courage. The Speaker knew perfectly well that an attack upon himself was coming and that it would be of a most vicious nature, but no sign of uneasiness showed in his manner. His voice as he made his rulings was as steady and full as ever, and the hand that wielded the gavel never trembled.

Pursley glanced once toward the lobby, and Guthrie thought he saw a faint look like a signal pass between him and the quiet Harlow, but he was not sure. Then Pursley half arose as if to make a motion and called "Mr. Speaker," but Carton's eye passed on and caught another member who had also called "Mr. Speaker."

"The gentleman from Mary County," said Carton, and the "gentleman from Mary County" was not Pursley, but Mr. Harman, an amiable and long-winded member who was devoted to a bill regulating the liquor traffic, now among those before the House. Harman would speak two hours, nothing could check the even, monotonous flow of his words, and Pursley sank back with a smothered but angry exclamation of disgust. But Guthrie looking at Mr. Harlow could not see his face change by a single quiver.

Mr. Harman spoke without effort and the members turned to the reading of newspapers or the writing of letters. There was all the rustle and noise of an ordinary session. It was not necessary to pay close attention to the gentleman from Mary County who, absorbed in his own words, would not notice, and would not be offended if he did. Various members also drifted to the lobbies where they talked to the ladies and Guthrie went with them.

"You told me something interesting was going to happen," said Miss Ransome to him. "Instead I am only listening to a very dull speech."

"A speech of any other kind is an exception," replied Guthrie smiling, though secretly he was resentful. "Mr. Pursley missed his chance and we shall have to wait. Nothing can happen now until the afternoon session, because Mr. Harman will certainly talk us into luncheon. But it gives a good chance for conversation." Guthrie was right, because when Mr. Harman came to the end all were tired and hungry, and the House adjourned until 2 P. M., when the lobbies were again filled with visitors, hoping to witness incidents of spirit and edge. Mrs. Dennison, Mrs. Hastings and their friends occupied the same position in the group, and the bright tints of their dresses made a vivid splash of colour against the dark background of the House. And now Mr. Pursley was too late a second time. Another member secured the floor, was recognised and began to discuss a bill relating to the codification of the State's laws. "A duller subject than ever!" said Miss Ransome, and Miss Pelham agreed with her.

Guthrie watched the Speaker closely, and seeing a little defiant gleam in his eyes, he surmised that Mr.

Carton was resolved to give his enemies as much trouble as possible. The bill must come up sooner or later, its consideration could not be postponed forever, but these men should know that the Speaker was armed and ready to give them trouble, since they chose to do as much for him. At least, Guthrie so construed Mr. Carton's look and he gave him his full sympathy.

Mr. Harlow was also in the lobby as usual. He occupied a seat at the rear. Mr. Harlow was a modest man, smooth of speech, never pushing hard against obstacles and content with an obscure place; but here, owing to the upward slope of the lobby, the last row of seats furnished the best view of the House, and there was not a member whom he could not see clearly.

Mr. Harlow seemed to know by instinct or acute observation, which is akin to it, when the member who had the floor was going to finish, and he caught Mr. Pursley's eye; the same faint almost imperceptible signal passed between them, and Mr. Pursley was on his feet just as the other man concluded, calling: "Mr. Speaker! Speaker!" There was nothing to do but to recognise him, and Mr. Carton did it easily and gracefully.

Mr. Pursley standing solidly upon his feet swept the House with a long semicircular smile of triumph, and a thrill ran through members and lobby alike. The expected moment had come and the young Speaker was about to go under fire. All were anxious to see how he would take it, and some hoped that he would take it ill. There were men who resented his superiority, his rapid advance and his personal aloofness so far as they were concerned, because the young Speaker was in a sense

fastidious and did not choose the commonplace or the splenetic for associates.

A dozen senators, hearing that Pursley had got the floor, abandoned their own chamber and came in to hear the attack. Guthrie saw Mr. Cobb and Mr. Wells sitting together.

Mr. Pursley began in a voice which was not without a certain power and effect, and he showed that he did not lack courage and resolution as he faced the House boldly.

He said that his had been the honour to present a bill which would be of vast benefit to the great city from which he came. and by example to the public everywhere. It was a bill that struck directly at three monopolies, three powerful corporations which were oppressing two hundred and fifty thousand people.

Guthrie glanced at Mr. Cobb and Mr. Wells, and saw approving looks on their faces. Both took fire readily at the sound of the words "corporations" and "monopolies."

Mr. Pursley continued. This bill, he said, had met with universal favour, had appealed strongly to the people of his city, but some malign influence had been directed against it. It had been referred to a committee and this committee had taken a very long time in acting upon it and reporting it. Even now it had been almost impossible for him to get it before the House and secure its free discussion."

Here Mr. Pursley paused and again that thrill of expectation ran through the House. He was about to come to names, and names are always so much more interesting than abstractions.

"I have worked hard for this bill," continued Mr.

Pursley, "because I know it is in the interest of the common people; but that malign influence of which I spoke has constantly opposed me, and until the present with success. It is with reluctance that I make charges; I do not wish to asperse the motives of anybody; far be it from me to attack a reputation, but every member of this House knows that there is only one person who can hold back a bill—who can, from term to term, prevent its consideration, and that man is the Speaker. Now I ask why?"

Again he paused and swept the house with his long, semicircular glance. A dark flush crept over the face of the Speaker, but he made no other sign.

Up sprang Jimmy Warfield, calling: "Mr. Speaker!"

"The gentleman from Hamilton County," said Mr. Carton in an unmoved voice.

"As a member of this honourable body," said Mr. Warfield, "I demand a clear and explicit statement. The gentleman from the Third District has stated that an undue influence was brought to bear against his bill and he has mentioned names. Now, does he charge the Speaker of this House with a personal interest in the defeat of his bill?"

A buzz ran through the House and the lobby. Mr. Warfield stood expectant, his good-humoured face for once frowning, and his chin thrust forward like the curve of an eagle's beak. But Mr. Pursley was not daunted.

"I state facts," he said, "and I leave it to the members of this house to draw whatever inferences they choose. This bill was introduced nearly a month ago; every one here knows that, and you know, too, with what difficulty I have been able to call it up to-day. It has been

said, 'hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may,' and, gentlemen, I am trying to hew to the line!"

He paused again, and once more looked about the House to find many an approving face. The country members who were in a great majority, dwelt in constant fear of corporations and monopolies, and to mention such things was like the sound of a trumpet calling them to war. And no doubt, too, Mr. Carton had impeded the passage of the bill. His best friends could not disprove it.

Out in the lobby Mary Pelham was saying impatiently to Clarice Ransome:

"Why does not Mr. Carton deny it, at once? I should think that a man would not be able to restrain his indignation at such a charge!"

Clarice recognised the anger in Miss Pelham's voice, and she knew why it was there and against whom it was directed. Suddenly she felt a new interest and a new sympathy in the life outspread before her.

"Perhaps it is because his dignity forbids," she replied, "or may be the rules require that he shall first hear formal charges. But I know I do not like the looks of that Mr. Pursley."

Miss Pelham said nothing more but gazed straight at the Speaker, and by and by he raised his eyes to hers. His was a glance of proud defiance; he seemed to ask of her neither mercy nor forgiveness, he seemed to say he was choosing the right and if she could not believe him, well—he must endure it as best he could. Guthrie saw it all, and his heart thrilled with pride in his friend whom he knew to be a fighter as resolute as he was honest. Then Jimmy Warfield, the champion of the Speaker, arose again. He said that he, too, like the

gentleman from the Third, came from the metropolis; he had studied this bill, and if the Speaker opposed the measure, it was because it was a bad bill and ought not to pass; of that he was convinced, and their chief was merely trying to defeat an organised attempt to plunder.

A hum of approval arose, but it was from the minority. The majority sat in cold silence and Senator Cobb frowned visibly. A member suggested that in view of the gravity of the charge a committee be formed to investigate, and the motion being carried without opposition, the Speaker said that inasmuch as he was concerned, the chair must be taken temporarily by some one else who should name the committee.

Mr. Harman was put in the chair and he at once selected a committee of five non-partisan men.

Then the House adjourned amid much suppressed excitement, and members and visitors passed out together.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER THE FIRST GUN

GUTHRIE, like the members, felt excitement, and a busy afternoon and evening lay before him. In open session of the House a charge of gravest import had been made against the Speaker, and it would be news of keen interest to every man—even in the remotest country district. This is a State that takes its politics as the great business of life, and so conspicuous a figure as the Speaker of the House could not be assailed without arousing discussion and feeling at half a million hearths. There would be an important despatch for him to write, and it would be a difficult matter to write it correctly.

He wished to follow Mrs. Dennison's party out of the building, and he saw Clarice Ransome linger a moment and glance at him, as if half-suggesting that he come. Almost any other man would have gone, but the sense of duty was so strong in Guthrie that he stayed. He looked after them regretfully as they went down the circular stairway, and then turned aside to a little room that opened from the outer hall. This was a private apartment, set aside for the Speaker, and the door was closed; but Guthrie, with the freedom of long habit and uniform welcome, pushed it open and went in unannounced.

The Speaker was sitting on a little sofa by the window,

his eyes downcast, his face gloomy, his mind yielding to a momentary depression very rare in him. Jimmy Warfield was in the room trying to cheer his friend, and Jimmy's presence was always a tonic, whether or not his words were logical. Two others were there, Henry Raynor, the Clerk of the House, and Allen, a country member.

"It's a scandalous attack, but it's just hot air!" Warfield was saying. "It's so preposterous that it defeats itself! This State knows you too well, Phil, to believe such a thing of you."

But Guthrie knew that Carton was thinking not alone of his political reputation and future, but also of something else, perhaps dearer, that was bound up with this issue.

"There's a lot back of it," said Raynor, the Clerk, a man with a strong, thin face. "They're hitting at you over Pursley's shoulders, Carton."

Carton nodded and when he saw Guthrie he assumed a more cheerful look.

"Well, Billy," he asked, "what are you going to write about it for the *Times*? I suppose you will have to spread the story all over the State?"

"Of course," replied Guthrie. "That is one of the burdens of the press. We have to write about our friends as well as our enemies, but you know well enough, Mr. Carton, that any reader of my despatch will see that the writer of it considers this charge ridiculous."

"That's so, Billy," replied the Speaker warmly. "You are a true friend and in advance I want to thank you. If only all were like you!"

Other correspondents were now coming in, and the

Speaker was bound to say something for the press. Every newspaper in the State would want to print his statement in the morning. Now Mr. Carton began to show indignation. The depression passed and the fighting spirit was aroused.

"You can quote me to the people as denouncing the statement in all the terms I know," he said. "It is made out of whole cloth. It is true that I have held the bill back, but it is because I believed it a bad bill, a bill in the interest of its incorporators, and not in the interest of the public. It was my duty to the city and the State to hold it back. Any one who says or intimates that I have a personal interest in beating the bill, tells an unmitigated falsehood. You can elaborate on that as much as you please."

"I wish he hadn't put in that admission about holding the bill back!" whispered one of the correspondents to Guthrie. "It looks bad."

"Oh! that's all right," replied Guthrie, but in his heart he knew the assertion to be true. Carton's action could be misrepresented readily, and in cold print at a distance it would look much worse than in the House where such action was understood.

The little room was now crowded with members who had come, some to hear Carton's statement to the press, some to offer him their personal sympathy and support, while one or two came to rejoice in his trouble.

Guthrie left quietly, because there was one person whom he wished to see before the departure of the afternoon train for the metropolis, due now in a quarter of an hour. He was sure that his man would go on that train and he hastened to the station. To the eastward the engine was whistling and a light cloud of smoke

rose over the hills. In a secluded corner of the station Guthrie saw Mr. Harlow, a small valise in his hand and a meditative but guileless look on his face. Guthrie approached him, and Mr. Harlow looked up.

"Are you going to the city too, Mr. Guthrie?" he asked.

"No," replied Guthrie, "I came here to interview you, Mr. Harlow."

"To interview me! Why, I am a private citizen dealing only with private citizens. How can any view of mine interest the public? Truly, Mr. Guthrie, the press is becoming wonderful in its enterprise!"

The mild face of Mr. Harlow expressed much surprise.

"It is reported that you are interested in the 'United,'" said Guthrie, "and it is reported, too, that you, or those behind you, have armed Pursley for the attack upon the Speaker, who is the chief obstacle to the passage of the bill. Are you willing to say anything on the subject for publication?"

The guileless eyes of Mr. Harlow opened wider.

"Dear me, Mr. Guthrie," he said, "you take me off my feet! I scarcely know Mr. Pursley, who, by the way seems an honest and able man, a worthy representative of our city. Really, I am at a loss; how can I say anything on a subject with which I am totally unfamiliar?"

"Then I shall state in my despatch that after Pursley's attack you left the capital at once, refusing to be interviewed?"

"Why speak of me at all?" said Mr. Harlow with an aggrieved air. "Cannot a private citizen come here and look on for a day or two to see how they make the

laws under which he lives without having his name put in the papers in all sorts of irrelevant ways?"

At that moment the train with a rush and a roar pulled into the station, and Mr. Harlow with a parting smile pulled himself aboard.

"He'll go down to the city and hide where our reporters can't find him, but at any rate I can say that he refused to talk," was Guthrie's thought.

Then he strolled back toward the centre of the town, busy in thought. He would wait until the last moment before sending his despatches in order to make them as complete and informing as possible, and the state of public opinion at the capital was not the least of the things that he was expected to describe.

He went to the large hotel in the heart of the city through which, as has been said, all the life of the little capital flows. In its ample offices and halls members of the Legislature and visitors meet in easy informality and talk, and here many an important measure is born or dies. It is an unorganised club and it has its conveniences, because one who does not wish to say anything or commit himself upon current events can stay away until the first desire for expression has passed.

Guthrie found the lobbies of the hotel crowded with people and humming with talk the burden of which was always Carton. Already men were taking sides. Jimmy Warfield, fiercely declaiming, was surrounded by a group. He charged that the attack upon Carton was made for a purpose by the people interested in this bill, whoever they were, and for that reason the assault was so vicious. In another corner Pursley also declaimed to his followers. He had not wished to impugn the Speaker's motives, he disliked aspersing the actions

of a man who had risen to the honourable position of Speaker, but Carton had forced him to play his hand. There was the bill, there was Carton's obvious interference with it, and people were compelled to draw their own conclusions. In another corner Zedekiah Pike, taller, thinner, and stronger of feature than ever, talked in a low voice to half a dozen mountain members who hung closely about him, plainly intimating to all who might come that they did not wish any one else to enter their circle or hear what was being said by their leader.

And from group to group flitted the correspondents, eager to get opinions from the more prominent men or to determine the temperature of the Legislature by means of this infallible thermometer, and Guthrie devoted some attention to the same subject. There are two kinds of correspondents; those who collect news and those who absorb it. Guthrie fell within the latter class, which is by far the abler of the two, because the former are machine-made, while the latter are born, and know instinctively just what things are worth. Moreover, they do not go to people for news, because people come to them with it and gladly tell it.

So Guthrie wandered about in the lobbies, apparently seeking nothing but finding much. He confirmed here his first impression that the bulk of sentiment was against Carton. The Speaker had been too fastidious in his tastes and companionships. He had offended inferior men by a lack of consideration for their opinions, and in this Carton had not been tactful, because he ignored a universal trait of the human race—the jealousy with which the commonplace regard those of higher talents. “I wish that he wasn't quite so

stiff!" was Guthrie's thought, because he truly liked and admired Carton.

Moreover, there was a real and honest feeling in the Legislature against monopolies, and it seemed to the majority of the members that Carton's action had been in favour of them, although they had been loath to believe him dishonest.

It made Guthrie sick at heart. A great fight, pushed by secret but powerful agencies, was to be made on Carton, and in its train would come consequences, innumerable and ruinous. It would create a split in the party—it was bound to do so, and Guthrie's mind revolted at the thought. He was a Democrat by long inheritance, association, training and belief, and never could be otherwise. The State was regularly Democratic, too, but lately the majority had been narrowing and ten thousand votes shifted the other way would give the victory to the Republicans.

It grieved Guthrie to think of such a change, but a long fight over Carton with its resulting bitterness was almost sure to cause it.

He met Wharton, the correspondent of the chief Republican daily of the State—and in this State a legislative correspondent is supposed to be not only a narrator of news, but in an indirect way an agent of his party, too. Wharton was exultant, and he clapped his hand cheerfully upon Guthrie's shoulder.

"Billy, old man," he exclaimed, "you Democrats are up against it this term. If you come out of this fight on Carton with all your feathers left, then I'm mightily mistaken!"

"I'm afraid you're right, Wharton," replied Guthrie frankly. "What are you going to write about it?"

"Five thousand words at least. Why, this is a sensation sure enough—a corker!"

"I mean what, not how much."

"Oh, well! As for that—I'm a Republican, you know, Billy, but I don't have to do any colouring or altering of the perspective here. I merely state the charges and the facts and the people draw their own conclusions. I like Carton and I'm confoundedly sorry for him, but news is news and politics is politics."

"I don't believe that Carton has any interest either directly or indirectly in defeating that bill," said Guthrie defiantly.

"Neither do I," said Wharton, "but it will be deucedly hard to prove it to the satisfaction of the great American public, which is ready to believe in the wickedness of any man in office."

Guthrie lived in the same hotel in a quiet room on the third floor, and feeling that he had learned enough for his purpose, he retired to it and wrote carefully for three hours. On this occasion he had no hesitation in "colouring" his own despatches, that is, to indicate throughout them his belief in Carton's innocence, in such a way as to incline the reader to the same point of view. He felt that he had a right to do this because he did not think corruption in Carton possible.

But he sighed when he read over the despatch. It did not look so well for Carton, after all. He filed it at the telegraph office, marking at the end: "More to come," which meant that he would add something, later in the night. Then he put on his evening clothes and went forth again. His destination was the governor's house, a low, roomy old building erected early in the history of the State for the use of its governors and full of com-

fort and comfortable associations. Here the young governor and his wife, yet younger, had gathered around them a brilliant little group for the winter. The session of the Legislature is always the special season in the capital, and this year, owing to the youth of the governor and his wife, it had a finer social bloom than any other in many years. The house was full of guests and Clarice Ransome and Mary Pelham were among them.

Guthrie paused before the governor's house with his hand upon the gate. He was always welcome there, and he knew it. And he liked the old house, too, for its own sake. It seemed to him with its dark woods, its wide halls and its lack of ostentation, to be so full of democratic dignity and simplicity. There was no attendant on guard, no livery, but any one who chose might ring the bell at the governor's door and he would be answered according to his mission.

Lights were shining from all the windows and fell in bars of silver across the grass which the touch of winter had turned brown on the lawn. Guthrie thought he heard the faint sound of voices within. He opened the gate, entered the grounds and rang at the door.

Paul Hastings, the governor, met him in the hall, after he had been shown in by the servant.

"Billy," he said, as he shook hands, I'm glad to see you, but I was thinking it might be somebody else."

"Carton?" said Guthrie, intuitively.

"Yes, Carton. This is an awfully unpleasant thing, and I've been trying to guess whether he'd shut himself up for a few days or boldly face the public at once."

Guthrie glanced at the governor's face, but he read nothing there. If Carton were a guest in that house, then people might attack the governor, too, as the

Speaker's friend, and the governor himself, in the course of time, would want more from the public. Could Paul Hastings be moved by any such selfish or timid impulse and hope that Carton would stay away? Guthrie could not tell and he replied:

"I think Carton will face the public boldly—even defiantly. You know his nature, governor."

"That's so," said Mr. Hastings, "but come in; the ladies are here."

He led the way to the drawing-room, whence floated the sound of voices. It was an old-fashioned apartment, very large, all in dark oak and at one end in a vast fireplace burned a great heap of hickory logs. It was this rather than the gas-lights in the chandelier that illuminated the room, the sparkling flames casting a crimson glow over the floor and the walls.

It was all wonderfully cheerful and within Guthrie saw Mrs. Hastings, Mrs. Dennison, Miss Ransome, Miss Pelham, Senator Cobb, Jimmy Warfield and half a dozen others. They made him welcome both for his own sake, and because he was known socially as one of the governor's group.

Lucy Hastings came forward to meet him. She was a woman of gentle manner, who rarely said an unpleasant thing, never mistaking cutting words for wit; consequently she made few enemies for herself—and none for her husband, which was important, although she did not think of it.

Then Guthrie saw that she welcomed him with genuine pleasure and it made him feel at home, all the more so because Clarice Ransome glanced at him rather coldly—he had not followed from the Capitol when she half invited him to come. Yet he wished to make

apologies and presently, when he was with Miss Ransome, he said incidentally:

"It has been a busy day for me, but not of the kind I like. We correspondents always want news, but I take no pleasure in that which I have had to write to-day!"

"You like Mr. Carton?"

"As I would a brother."

"Senator Cobb, who seems to me an honest man says that he has done wrong," and she nodded toward the other corner of the room where Senator Cobb was sitting.

"Senator Cobb not only seems to be an honest man, but he is one," replied Guthrie. "Nevertheless, I am convinced that he is often mistaken. Still, I suppose you don't want to talk of politics."

"On the contrary, I do," she said with animation. "Will the men never learn that women are interested in the things that seem to be within the peculiar province of men? Perhaps that is why we are—it is the mystery that attracts us."

Beholding her interest and convinced that it was real, not assumed, Guthrie undertook to explain the situation, telling how his party in a way, must support its Speaker, yet he was afraid the feeling in regard to corporations would prove too strong; there had been for a long time in the State a growing sentiment against them, some of it just, some of it unjust, but whether just or unjust, it was very powerful and must be recognised. And then he told her of all the wheels within wheels; it was a State of very strong feelings, and consequently strong local jealousies existed; the mountains were nearly always arrayed against the lowlands; if the lowlands were for a measure, the mountains considered it their

duty to be against it. In fact, there were in habit, association and point of view two different races within the State.

"And I am by inheritance?" she said,

"A lowlander, of course."

"But I do not dislike that Mr. Pike, the mountaineer; I saw much in him that was attractive."

"And much also that was different from us. Nor does it follow because we are lowlanders, that the lowlanders are always right and the mountaineers always wrong. The nearest approach to our mountaineers, I think, were the Scotch Highlanders of two hundred years ago, only ours, I am confident, are a better people."

Then he told of journeys into the mountains with the militia to put down the feuds, of nights on the peaks, lone trails along the cliffs, and hidden marksmen, and he interested her like a new Othello. She had piqued him from the first by her indifference to her native land, her educated thought that all that was old must be picturesque and all that was new must be raw and dull; and now when he saw that he could arouse and interest her in her own, he felt intense satisfaction.

"You tell of life in much variety," she said at last.

"Yes," he replied, and he intended his words specially for her, "it has always seemed to me that life is so much more interesting here than it is in Europe, for instance, except for a very few. There a man is numbered and ticketed the day he is born, and assigned to his place on a shelf in a row of shelves, be the shelf high or low; while here every man is free to pursue his chosen career to the end, without let or hindrance, and that is what makes life worth living."

Guthrie paused. His face was flushed and his eyes shining. Clarice noticed the light in his eyes and the eagerness of his tone, and despite herself she thrilled with sympathy. But she would not show it.

"And you, of course, have an ambition, Mr. Guthrie," she said. "Are you loath to tell it?"

Guthrie laughed a little.

"Mine doesn't count for much," he replied lightly. "The only thing that I have ahead for which I am working is our Washington bureau. Our man there is getting old—he's had it thirty years—and as he has saved plenty of money, he may retire soon. If he does, I want to get it. Washington, it seems to me, is the grandest arena in the world for the work of a newspaper man."

"I hope you will get the post, Mr. Guthrie," she said with real sympathy, and Guthrie looked his thanks.

But Mrs. Hastings told him something a little later that made him regret part of what he had said to Miss Ransome.

"They say she is to be married to a continental nobleman, a man whom she met in Brussels, I think, Count Raoul d'Estournelle," said Mrs. Hastings. It was her mother that arranged it, I hear. You know Mr. Ransome has made a great deal of money, and Mrs. Ransome is very anxious for them to live abroad and for Clarice to make what she calls a grand marriage."

"And for the prospective Countess d'Estournelle to be thoroughly miserable!" said Guthrie with some heat.

Mrs. Hastings looked keenly at him but said nothing. For continental noblemen he had a hatred and con-

tempt partly inherent and partly cultivated. Perhaps he had been unfortunate in the specimens he had seen, but whenever he saw one, he thought involuntarily of the bitter description of them given by his friend, Senator Cobb.—“Half man, half monkey.” And with their little pointed beards, their curled hair, their perfume and above all, the suspicion of that awful thing, hair-oil, they aroused all his enmity.

“I take it that such men merely come here as fortune-hunters,” he said.

“Let us hope not, in this case, at least,” said Mrs. Hastings. “Ah! there is some one else.”

They heard the bell ring, and a moment later the tall form of Mr. Carton stood in the doorway of the drawing-room.

CHAPTER V

IN THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE

THE Speaker had come. He had chosen to face the public. Guthrie had not dreamed of his doing otherwise. Here among his friends, or those whom he wished to be his friends, he showed no sign of diffidence or discouragement. In such a society as this he was at his best, his manner all ease and lightness and gayety. Clarice Ransome, looking at him, could not believe—such was the influence of her European education—that he was of obscure birth, a poor country boy who had raised himself so high, and who had the bearing that a nobleman is supposed to have. And she wondered, too, if he were innocent of the charge brought against him. Mr. Guthrie believed in him, but an easy manner did not always hide an innocent heart.

Clarice noticed a slight constraint on the part of Senator Cobb, Mary Pelham, and one or two others. They did not seem to approve wholly of the Speaker and his light manner at such a moment, and she began to watch them covertly but none the less keenly.

Clarice Ransome was surprised and perhaps a little disappointed to find that she was beginning to take a great interest in these men, their ambitions and their fortunes—ambitions and fortunes, too, in which the women were interwoven. It gave her at first a

sense of aloofness, as if she had no part in this fresh active life so full of youthful zeal and energy, and the thought was not pleasant to her. Here all the men were masculine and all the women feminine, and she was in the midst of affairs. The talk for this night, at least, was not of trivialities, but of things intimately concerning the life of the State.

She was in this frame of mind when the drift of the guests from point to point brought to her side old Senator Cobb, a man for whom she felt a spontaneous liking because of his noble, old-fashioned courtesy and deference to women—a manner which she knew to be the result of feeling and not of purpose.

"You have been talking to Mr. Guthrie," said the senator, "a fine young man, though swayed too much perhaps by city and aristocratic influences. He and I don't agree often, but I can't keep from liking him."

She wondered why he had spoken to her of Guthrie, and then concluded that it was a mere chance. But she did not care to show great interest in Guthrie and she responded a trifle coldly:

"He seems to be a favourite here and I have wondered why; in Europe—I was educated abroad you know—representatives of the press are not such familiar figures in official life."

The eyes of the old senator sparkled. She had touched him all unconsciously upon one of his sensitive points.

"This is a democracy, Miss Ransome," he said, "and we should resist any attempt to create an exclusive class of any kind. Public officials, no matter how high, are no better than anybody else. The President

of the United States is merely one of many millions of our citizens."

Meanwhile the governor had drawn Guthrie to a small apartment opening from the drawing-room where Jimmy Warfield and two or three others were looking at a newspaper spread upon a table. It was an afternoon extra from the second city of the State not more than forty miles away, and the entire first page was occupied with a florid account of the sensational scene in the House.

Guthrie looked at the array of headlines and the leaded columns, and the whole was distinctly unfavourable to Carton.

"And see," said Jimmy Warfield in despair, "here's Carton's denial at the end—just a few lines, stiff, defiant, no explanation at all. I wish the man weren't so high and haughty! One ought not to be a demagogue, but neither ought one to make enemies gratuitously!"

The governor frowned. Guthrie saw clearly that he did not approve of Carton's course and that he foresaw the gravest consequences.

"He ought to have gone into details," said the governor, shaking his head. "This shows how it is possible for an innocent man to appear guilty."

"But not to himself," said Carton over their shoulders. "A man conscious of his own innocence does not need to plead before others."

He had entered, unintentionally, without being heard. Guthrie quietly closed the door.

Carton's face was flushed and his eyes sparkled with anger. He glanced once at the glaring headlines and then gazed squarely at the governor.

"Hastings," he said, "it was wrong in me to have come here, and I am sorry that I did it. I do not wish to imperil the political future of anybody by any social intimacy of mine."

The governor's face flushed in turn and into his eyes, too, came an angry light.

"Carton," he said, "in five minutes you will be ready to apologise to me for that!"

"You'll do it in one minute, Phil, if you've got any sense of decency left!" said Jimmy Warfield, drumming on the table with his fingers.

The red passed out of Carton's face and his eyes fell. Then he held out his hand to the governor who took it in a firm clasp.

"Paul," he said, "I wronged you. I spoke from a hasty temper and I beg your pardon."

"That's the first sensible thing you've done to-day, Phil," said Jimmy Warfield.

And while not going so far as Jimmy Warfield, Guthrie felt nevertheless that he was on the trail of the truth.

"Carton," said Mr. Hastings with dignity, and yet not without warmth and sympathy for the man who had apologised to him, "this house is always open to you at any time, and not only is it open to you, but I shall be glad to see you enter it."

"I know it, Paul, I know it," said Carton.

Guthrie quietly opened the door again and the hum of voices came once more from the drawing-room. An unpleasant incident had passed off better than he had hoped.

"I'm going back to the ladies," he said, "and I think

that the rest of you had better come, too, or I won't know how to apologise for you."

The governor thrust the newspaper into his pocket and followed Guthrie, who joined Mary Pelham for the first time that evening. That the Speaker was attentive to Mary Pelham was a secret to few in the capital, and the ill-natured, while not denying her beauty and charm, said that part of her attraction for him lay in the great family connection and political power that she could bring to him.

Guthrie found her animated by an artificial gayety, an almost feverish glitter shining in her eyes, and her conversation having the slightest touch of volubility. He could not doubt that she had been deeply stirred by the attacks on Carton. He knew, too, her critical nature; in the course of things she must have heard the insinuations against Carton's devotion to her, and she could not help being affected to some extent by them; that feeling would lend colour in her mind to the present charges against his integrity. Guthrie, although he did not speak directly of Carton, found that his surmise was true; she would glance now and then in a questioning or disparaging way at the Speaker. Guthrie wished to speak in behalf of his friend, to say something in his praise, but he did not dare; it would be too obvious—she would take fire both at the defence of Carton and the impeachment of her own faith in him. He could see that her pride on her own account and his was deeply touched, and Guthrie began to feel as much sorrow for her as he did for Carton.

It was one of Mrs. Hastings' Wednesday Evenings and there was a stream of callers—she was the governor's wife, and she was highly popular too for her own

sake—and the rooms began to be crowded. Many of those who came were official enemies alike of the governor and the Speaker and among such were the Republicans. But the Republicans socially were no trouble because their political hostility was taken for granted, and it rather lent a zest to private friendship. It was the enemies within the party, among the Democrats themselves who could bring social constraint. But it was the custom of a century, now a rigid law, for the governor and his wife to invite all members of the Senate and the House to their receptions, and they were coming.

Senator Dennison and his wife were present, and the senator was making himself agreeable to these legislators who in another year or two would vote on his reelection. There were also two or three members of the Lower House of Congress, and among them Henry Clay Warner, the member from Guthrie's own district, the Fifth, who had not turned out as well as the voters had hoped.

Everybody noted the presence of the Speaker and his high manner. Carton seemed to have forgotten the incident in the smaller room where he allowed his pride to carry him too far, at first, and once more he was haughty and defiant. Guthrie exchanged a glance with Jimmy Warfield; Jimmy was frowning, and his look said clearly that Carton was inviting more enmity. Warfield himself was so unsuspicious, so genial in manner and such a believer in human nature that he liked most men and most men naturally liked him; hence he could not understand Carton's course and he did not allow for the difference in temperament.

There was a slight stir near the door, a suppressed

exclamation of surprise from Warfield, and Guthrie turning about saw entering the Honourable Mr. Pursley in evening dress, a great diamond stud glittering on the white expanse of his shirt-bosom. Guthrie was with Miss Ransome at that moment and she expressed astonishment.

"I did not think he would come here to-night," she said.

"He has the right," replied Guthrie. "The unwritten law gives it to him and the Honourable Alfred Lyttleton Pursley is the man to come."

Mr. Pursley was not abashed. No scruples disturbed his delicate soul. He advanced boldly to the centre of the room, dispensing greetings to right and left in suave, expansive manner. He bowed to Guthrie and also extended a polite hand.

"Ah, the press is always present," he said ingratiatingly.

"But off duty now, don't be afraid, Mr. Pursley," replied Guthrie.

Mr. Pursley laughed, and lingered, looking admiringly at Miss Ransome, and Guthrie was forced to introduce him. Mr. Pursley strove to be impressive. He had heard that Miss Ransome had just returned to her own country after many years spent abroad, and he desired to show her one of the finest flowers of free institutions. He spoke with much emphasis, adding to his expressiveness with an occasional gesture, and at last became oratorical. But in a few minutes he passed on. Mr. Pursley was too much of a diplomatist to allow one person, even a beautiful girl, to monopolise his time, when there were present many others worthy of his attention.

"Is he one of our typical public men?" asked Clarice with sly irony, after Mr. Pursley had gone.

"No, thank God!" replied Guthrie with devout emphasis. "That is one of our exceptions. But look! He and Carton are about to meet!"

Clarice gazed with increased interest. Mr. Pursley in his triumphal progress had been moving unconsciously toward Carton who was standing at the far side of the room. The people opened for him a lane that led toward the Speaker, and he did not notice where it was carrying him. He spoke suavely to Senator Cobb and then looking up found himself face to face with the Speaker. Mr. Pursley started and despite his assurance his red face turned redder. The Speaker gave him a surprised and angry glance. Clarice watching them was trembling with interest.

"What will he do?" she asked.

"Who? The Speaker? I don't know myself," replied Guthrie.

But Mr. Carton, after his momentary surprise, showed his quality. He was there, a guest, and it behooved the courteous man of the world not to make even the faintest semblance of a scene in the house of his host. He felt, too, that the eyes of fifty people were upon him and that they would tell the whole State how he bore himself.

"Good evening, Mr. Pursley," he said with easy grace. "All of us like to come here and get fresh inspiration for the next day's labours, don't we?"

"Right you are," replied Mr. Pursley. "Beauty always appeals to me, Mr. Carton. You wouldn't think it of a man like myself, all for business and may

be, as the world sees me, a little hard, but it's a fact on my honour."

Mr. Pursley made an inclusive bow to everybody, especially to the ladies under his general head of "Beauty." A smile passed over fifty faces and Mr. Pursley sought less embarrassing company.

Guthrie uttered a low "Ah!" of relief.

"Why do you say that?" asked Miss Ransome.

"Because Philip Carton has done better than I hoped he would," replied Guthrie. "He has been able to swallow a little of his awful pride and to show some tact."

Guthrie saw that the Speaker had raised himself in the opinion of every one present, and a few minutes later Lucy Hastings confided to him her relief.

"I was afraid that he would turn his back on Mr. Pursley," she said frankly, "and then I should not have known what to do. But I feel so sorry for Mr. Carton!"

"So do I," said Guthrie frankly. "He will have a hard row to hoe."

The crucial tests of the evening were now over, and it passed on pleasantly. Mr. Pursley still coruscated, and he was endured because he was a part of the Government of the State, and had a right there by ancient custom. Carton became more flexible, although he did not unbend fully, and Guthrie saw him and Mary Pelham together for a little while; but their manner indicated nothing. He looked at his watch by and by, and decided that it was time to go to the telegraph office and send the brief additional despatch to the *Times* which he had indicated was to come. Jimmy Warfield heard the light snap of the closing watch, and turning asked:

"Are you going, Billy?"

"Yes, I must," replied Guthrie; "I have a little work to do."

"Then wait a moment; Carton and I are leaving, too, and we can walk along together."

The three saying their good nights passed into the street, Carton in the centre and Guthrie and Warfield on either side. Guthrie noticed how Carton took the centre as his right.

The three were silent as they walked toward the hotel—both Carton and Warfield had rooms there, too. The capital was not brilliantly lighted, and the darkness lay over it like a blanket, with stars twinkling through holes, and the circle of hills looming vaguely.

"Well, boys," said Carton at last, "I did not expect to meet Pursley there, but, when I did meet him, I felt as I used to do sometimes when I was a boy and angry at another boy: I wanted to strike him in the face!"

"But when I became a man, I put away childish things," said Jimmy Warfield.

Carton said nothing, and they reached the flight of stone steps leading up to the lobby of the hotel. A man was standing there, wrapped in a long black overcoat, the silk hat on his head tipped slightly to one side. When the stranger heard the footsteps beside him, he turned and disclosed the face of Pursley.

"Well, Mr. Speaker," said the member cheerily, "the spirit moved our feet about the same time and in the same direction, didn't it?"

By the electric light flaring from the hotel, Guthrie saw Carton's face flame into red. He could put the rein upon his temper in the house of the Governor where they were both friends, but here he let it go.

"Pursley, you infernal scoundrel, don't you ever speak to me again!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Pursley's cheeks turned purple, but his control over himself was better than Carton's.

"Mr. Carton," he replied, "what I said about you, I said on the floor of the House, of which I am a member, and where I have the privilege. I don't let my political quarrels become personal, and I give you this piece of advice without charge: don't you do it, either!"

So speaking, Mr. Pursley marched into the hotel.

"You let him score on you there, Phil," said Jimmy Warfield in the light and careless tone with which he knew how to speed a rebuke.

"What do you take me for?" exclaimed Carton angrily. "Am I to smile and shake hands, as if I liked him, with a man who has called me a thief and a blackmailer?"

"When I became a man I put away childish things," again quoted Jimmy Warfield softly.

Carton, leaving his friends, stalked angrily into the hotel, passed without a word through the lobby where many men yet lingered, and went to his room.

"He'll be hard to manage, Billy," said Jimmy Warfield, as he looked after the Speaker's form disappearing up the stairway.

"Very," said Guthrie emphatically. "I wonder if we couldn't get old Senator Dennison to take hold of him."

"We might later on, but not yet. Better let him alone for the present. He's too sensitive just now, and would resent anything."

Guthrie, bidding Warfield good night, sent his brief despatch, and went to bed.

CHAPTER VI.

A MAKER OF REPUTATIONS

THE next day's session of both House and Senate was languid so far as concerned their own business, but there was keen interest in both bodies to see the newspaper accounts of Carton's affairs. Both senators and representatives knew that first impressions were likely to have a deep effect upon the public, and the State was bound to get all its news from the press: there was no other source of either information or misinformation.

This little city is peculiar in the fact that it is more isolated than any other important place in the State. Nestling in its hollow in the hills, it has but a single line of railroad, and the members do not know how the people take any act of theirs until the trains come east and west, bringing the newspapers from the larger cities of the State.

Guthrie saw the Speaker open his *Times* and read his account with close attention. When Carton finished it, he leaned over in his chair—Guthrie sat scarcely a yard away—and whispered: "Billy, I thank you;" but, when he read some of the other papers, he frowned and once he bit his lip savagely. Guthrie later examined them at his leisure, and it was his opinion that the first impression upon the State would be unfavourable, despite the powerful influence of the *Times*. But he

said nothing, and left Carton for the present, having an engagement to which he was looking forward with pleasure.

The Legislature adjourned for the day at 2 p. m., and he had asked Clarice Ransome to go driving with him on the beautiful river road that leads out of the town and into the great lowland valley. She had accepted, and half an hour later Guthrie was at the Governor's door with the carriage.

"Don't forget to show her all the glory of the place," said Lucy Hastings as they drove away; and Guthrie, giving his promise, increased the speed of his horses until they swung with their long, level trot into the river road.

Winter had not come in full tide, yet the day was cold and crisp with a wonderful sunny light over the river and the brown hills. Guthrie felt a great exhilaration as he drew the fur robes more closely about them. It was partly the crisp and tonic freshness of the day and partly the presence, by his side, of Clarice with whom he began to feel for the first time the sense of comradeship. But its effect was to make him silent rather than talkative, and he spoke so seldom that Clarice glanced at him in surprise. He was looking straight ahead, apparently at the hills and the river, but, when she studied his face, the colour in her own cheeks deepened a little; suddenly, she was embarrassed, but as suddenly the embarrassment passed away.

"How is your Mr. Carton coming on?" she asked at length.

"Not too well, I fear," he replied. "So far as I can judge from the newspapers that have come in,

the impression that he has made upon the State in this crisis of his life is distinctly unfavourable. I shall do all I can for him in the *Times*, and the *Times* is powerful; but there are so many against us."

Then he relapsed into a thoughtful silence, and she was studying him. She noticed the firm set of his head, the curve of a long and masterful jaw, and her respect for him increased.

"It seems to me, Mr. Guthrie," she said, "that men in your profession are makers of reputations or—the destroyers of them!"

"That is so," replied Guthrie with a slight smile. "We are the heralds, the trumpeters of fame, whether it is good or evil."

"But you are trying to save Mr. Carton," she said, quietly pursuing her purpose, "and, by and by, you will be seeking to make or save the reputation of somebody else. Now, what do you intend to do for yourself?"

Guthrie looked at her in slow surprise. He was so much immersed in his present work that he had not thought much about his future beyond the Washington bureau. So he told her again of his design to go to the national capital for the *Times*.

"But after that?" she persisted.

"Well I don't know," replied Guthrie slowly. "To tell you the truth I haven't looked so far, but I suppose I expect to be a great editor some day."

"But aren't the great editors nowadays the proprietors? And, as I understand it, it takes a millionaire to be the proprietor of a successful newspaper. And are you a money-maker?"

She smiled at him, as if she asked the questions lightly or carelessly.

"No," replied Guthrie with conviction, "I am not a money-maker. I'm a writer. I've thought in a vague sort of way that I'd like to be rich, but I suppose I never shall be. I can pursue money for a while, but, just when I'm about to catch up, something else that I'm more interested in draws me off."

She smiled again, and once more regarded his face with attention as he gazed absently at the brown slope of the hills.

"I don't think I should like to be an anonymous writer all my life," she said. "No matter how brilliantly you may write a thing, only a few people in your office will know who has done it, and yet prestige, credit for good work, is part of one's capital in life. When one's work is of a semipublic nature, one is entitled to credit, not only from one's employer, but from the public also."

"Still," said Guthrie, "in a country like this, journalism must be anonymous; it cannot be carried on in any other fashion."

She did not reply. It did not seem to her that he had quite understood her, and she did not feel that she was entitled to go further with one whom she had not known long. She was quite sure that she liked him, and she was beginning to admire him, partly for his devotion to the cause of others; but she could not see to just what point his career would lead him.

She was aware, too, that her interest in him, to a great extent at least, was due to the difference between him and the young men whom she had known abroad—Europeans and some Americans living in Europe. She found in Guthrie a zeal, an enthusiasm, a love of his work, a desire to make a career, and a disregard

for the little things of life, that she found stimulating by contact. She did not care to disregard the little things herself, but she was beginning to be aware that they were merely little things after all. She had been accustomed to men who considered it bad form to be interested in one's work, if one had any, and to feel or to affect to feel indifference or cynicism toward all things. She had once thought this distinguished and impressive—now she feared that it was only a pose or a mere weakness; an air of boredom which was once the hall-mark of superiority was becoming the badge of ill manners. She could not endorse all that Guthrie said; but she liked his sincerity, and he seemed to her more masculine than those others.

His thoughts, unlike hers, were not travelling beyond the one by his side. The paramount wish with him was to make a convert—that is, to bring her over to his ways of thinking. She had piqued him by her indifference, and sometimes by her critical coldness toward her own people and their affairs. This increased his desire to convert her and to interest her in her own. His zeal hitherto had been wholly professional, the case appealing to him somewhat in the manner of a difficult assignment, the non-performance of which would injure his prestige. But now, sitting by his side with no one else near, she made to him an appeal of a wholly different kind, and the appeal was of the essence feminine. She was not a woman to be converted, but just an attractive girl, and unconsciously he liked her much the better because of it. He suddenly realised that she was very beautiful—it had not occurred to him to see it before, and, for the while, he felt embarrassment.

A handsome old man with beautiful silver-gray hair met them. He was on foot, but he walked briskly and with vigour. A fine smile lighted up his face as he saw Guthrie, and he bowed.

"That was the Bishop was it not?" asked Clarice when the old man was out of hearing.

"Yes."

"He seemed to know you well."

"He does," replied Guthrie. "He has known me all my life."

He was tempted to tell her of Templeton's case and his part in it, in order to see if she would support him; but he refrained, and he was glad of it when they met Templeton himself five minutes later.

Templeton was alone in a light cart behind a thoroughbred trotter, whose swift hoofs made sparks fly from the road. The man himself was wrapped in a great fur coat, and he handled the lines with a practised hand, making a brave appearance as he dashed past. He bowed curtly to Guthrie, the bow having in it a note of derision. "He thinks I wanted to publish that story about him and couldn't," was Guthrie's inference.

"That was Mr. Templeton of the treasurer's office," he said in reply to Clarice's inquiring look.

"He drives well," she said.

"Yes, I suppose he is of the type that girls call 'dashing!'"

She looked at him in surprise. There was a slight touch of bitterness in his tone, but, as he offered no explanation, she could not ask for one.

The road, still as smooth as a floor, ran close beside the river, and presently the hills dipped down, leaving

low banks, where the water eddied into a cove. Here lay a large raft in the centre of which had been built a little log-house with a stove-pipe thrust through the roof. Two men sat on the raft at the door of the house, smoking their pipes. They were long, thin, angular, bony, and yellow, and they looked at the passing carriage with dull, expressionless eyes.

"Mountaineers," said Guthrie. "They are pretty late with their raft, as the river is likely to be covered with ice any time, soon. Queer people, those. I've been among them a lot, but I can't understand them. As I told you, they are a different race from us of the lowlands. They see everything at another angle. Ah, they've got a visitor!"

As the road began to ascend again, the carriage was proceeding slowly, and Guthrie saw a tall man cross the way and step upon the raft, which was tied to the bank.

"That looks much like the Reverend Zedekiah Pike," said Miss Ransome.

"So much like him that it is he," said Guthrie. "Those must be constituents of his; they float their timber down here from many parts of the mountains."

He was idly watching Mr. Pike, not from any particular curiosity, but because the member naturally attracted attention, especially in a landscape which now contained so few human figures. This vague interest was suddenly increased to keen excitement when he saw one of the men on the raft spring to his feet at sight of Mr. Pike and draw a revolver. As he raised it aloft, the polished barrel shone in the wintry sunlight with a blue glitter, but Mr. Pike held up his

hand as if in peace, the third man interfered, and the pistol was lowered.

Clarice was quivering with excitement and apprehension. She had never before seen a weapon drawn in anger.

"What does it mean?" she asked of Guthrie.

"I do not know," he replied seriously, "except that we were on the edge of a tragedy. I saw that mountaineer's finger on the trigger."

"And what do you infer?" she asked, not able to hide her curiosity.

"That those men, instead of being Mr. Pike's constituents, are the exact opposite."

She understood Guthrie's hint. She had heard of the mountain feuds, but they always seemed far away and vague; she could not realise them; even here the mountains were yet distant, and this was the capital of the State, full of peaceful men and women.

She looked back as they passed over the hill, and saw Mr. Pike standing very erect on the raft and talking to one of the men who was also standing. But the other, he who had drawn the revolver, was sitting down again, lazily smoking his pipe.

"It is no affair of mine, Mr. Guthrie," she said, "but that little scene has aroused all my curiosity."

"Mine has been burning a little, too," said Guthrie with a laugh.

But they said no more of Mr. Pike at present, and Clarice by and by came back to Guthrie, who was a subject that interested her more. She knew no particular reason why she should have his possible career on her mind, but he seemed to her to be somewhat dif-

ferent from the ordinary types, and she wished to know how he had arrived at his present state.

Guthrie himself was a model interviewer, and much of his skill in the art lay in his lack of intrusiveness, his suppression of all the paraphernalia of his trade, and his simplicity of manner—all tending to inspire confidence in his subject and to make him feel that the interviewer was his confidential friend. This had grown to be second nature with him, so much a matter of practice rather than of deliberation that he failed to notice how he was confronted by an art of the same character as his own, but even more delicate.

Under her deft manipulation, Guthrie told of his early ambition to be a lawyer first, and then a statesman. In the State in which he was born and in which he lived, the law seemed to be the only pathway to public life. Practically everybody who rose to distinction among the people—save in commerce, and for that he had no vocation—had begun by defending or prosecuting petty criminals in magistrates' courts. In the early days of the State, the only men of culture were the lawyers and the clergymen, and, in his part of it, the clergymen were debarred from public life by the nature of their calling. Hence it was left for the lawyers to make the laws and administer them.

It had never occurred to Guthrie as a boy to choose any other profession than the law, although the dusty court-houses, the sheepskin-bound books, and the sight of the lawyers browbeating witnesses or haggling over technicalities, repelled him to the last degree. Yet it was still the occupation to which all the brightest and most ambitious boys were expected to turn as a matter of course. In that country, when a boy de-

veloped unusual ability, it was customary to say: "Why, he's smart enough to be a lawyer!" The strength of the lawyer with the public lay in his ability to speak, particularly in a State which loves oratory; and by oratory is meant the smooth flow of words, a sort of music appealing directly to the senses rather than any cogent form of logic. Guthrie early distrusted these orators, the majority of whom seemed to lean to demagoguery and to whatever cause they thought the majority of the voters favoured; but, in those immature days, he believed it was his bad luck to come into contact with the poorer specimens of the class: off in the other counties, there were men of higher type.

So he went to the metropolis of the State and studied the law, always with an eye to a public career when he should have won his triumphs in the court-room before judge and jury. Meanwhile and in order to provide himself with funds he began to do work for the *Times* in odd hours, aided by the friendship of an influential member of its staff. He did not notice at the time that his study of the law was an effort, but that newspaper work was easy and spontaneous; the law did not interest him a particle, his newspaper work was like a game of base-ball, played for its own sake—for the game itself. Clever lawyers were pointed out to him and it was told how this man or that man had gone into court with no case at all, and by sheer ability had won. It revolted his moral sense that any man should use an intellect for the triumph of the wrong over the right. He was not prepared to say that a lawyer should not do his best for the side that retained him, but he began to fear that his own mental make-up forbade his doing it. One day he saw a great lawyer,

famed for his skill in cross examination, frighten and confuse his opponent's client on the witness stand until the man made contradictory statements and lost his case. Then everybody complimented the great lawyer on his skill, and the newspapers printed a eulogistic account of his triumph, with his picture at the top; but Guthrie and all the lawyers knew that the man who lost his case was right and should have won. He could never think of that incident without a shudder.

"But not all lawyers are like that; there are exceptions," said Clarice.

"Happily there are," said Guthrie, and he thought of old Senator Cobb who told him once that he had never taken a case which he did not believe to be right. And Guthrie knew that Senator Cobb told the truth.

Clarice deftly led him back to himself and Guthrie resumed the thread of his story. He had been admitted to the bar, easily passing his examinations, learning enough for that purpose by the sheer power of memory and concentrated application. Then he looked around for an opportunity to practise and stayed a month in an office. But dry and dusty as the theory had seemed, the practice was worse. Nothing in it—neither its form nor its spirit—interested him; everything seemed to proceed indirectly—if you wanted a particular thing, you must ask for it under some other name than its own.

"Then," said Guthrie with a laugh, containing no trace of bitterness, "I got down one evening and had it out with myself. It came upon me suddenly, but with the full power of conviction, that nature had not intended me to be a lawyer and to try cases. I was on

the wrong road and I must get off at once. I was more resigned to this because I saw that in the city the law did not, as in the country, monopolise the best talent of the community. There the intellectual life was more varied; the law had good men, but there were men just as good in medicine, journalism, commerce, manufactures, and other pursuits. So you see, I was reconciled; every one wants to feel that the way is open for him to become President, whether he ever gets within a thousand miles of it or not. At any rate I went to the *Times* office."

Guthrie stopped and laughed. His face lighted up with some humorous recollections of his foray into the law.

"And what happened at the *Times* office?" asked Clarice sympathetically.

"Why, they took me at once," replied Guthrie. "I had been doing some work for them, as I told you, and they seemed to like it. 'You get to the inside of things here,' said the managing editor—I suppose I never got to the inside of the law. 'I didn't want to interfere with your study of the law, but I knew that sooner or later you'd come to us for a job. Why shouldn't you? You'll never be happy until you do the thing that suits you best.' Well, I've been with the *Times* ever since."

"It seems to me, nevertheless," said Clarice meditatively, "that there are more prospects in the law than in journalism."

"Don't think that I pose as a critic of the law!" said Guthrie briskly. "It's a noble profession, only it didn't suit me. I speak from the personal standpoint of one man, your humble servant. I suppose

that I've found now what the French call my *métier*. At least the work in it comes very easy."

"But don't you ever think of public life?" asked Clarice.

"Only in a semi-detached way now—that is, as a chronicler of it, with a small influence, perhaps, arising from that office. I am like one of the college boys at the football games who isn't in the game itself, but who can stand on the coaching lines and shout and yell and who make a lot of noise, and sometimes delude the public into the belief that he is really an important person. No, I'm in this business now and, like General Grant, I'll have to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer."

Clarice let the subject go, nor did Guthrie resume it. Instead, just as they were entering a stretch of level road he cracked his whip over the horses and they swung into a long, easy trot, maintaining a speed that Clarice scarcely realised. But it was most invigorating. They were young and they were marching toward easy terms. The crisp, cold air rushed past, making the blood sparkle in their veins and deepening the red in their cheeks. Guthrie gave Clarice a sidelong glance, and again wondered why he had not noticed before how handsome she was. He observed the long curve of her eyelashes, the lips closed so firmly, her attitude of strength, and he reflected that after all it was worth while to convert this girl to his opinions; she might not be frivolous, as he had first thought, or devoted to secondary matters.

Though the landscape was wintry, it had also some lingering aspects of late autumn. The haze on the rolling hills was fine and misty like that of Indian sum-

mer, and afar three or four threads of smoke showed like silver wire against a white, cold sky. While the capital lay within the heart of a coil of hills, the edge of the great lowland valley was only a few miles away, and now they swung into it, the fertile lands stretching for miles and dotted at intervals with the solid brick houses, each inside its cluster of trees.

Clarice spoke her admiration and said it reminded her of rural France. Then Guthrie turned interviewer, and by suggestion induced her to tell much of her own life abroad. He wished to hear of the Count Raoul d'Estournelle, but he would not intimate anything concerning him nor did she speak of him. Instead she told of the teaching through which she had passed.

She had been taught to see what was only strange, *outré*, in her own country. The press of Europe reported solely its accidents and its crimes, and these by and by, appearing as the only pictures silhouetted against the screen, gave her a single mental impression of it.

"There was the Spanish War," she said. "It gave me a distaste. Everybody on the Continent said it was the unprovoked attack of a big nation upon a little one with the deliberate intention of taking the latter's territory."

Guthrie smiled and said nothing. He knew all that had gone before that struggle, but he judged that she was, to a much larger extent than she realised, under adverse influences, and it would be wiser to keep silent for a while.

Then they drifted into the personal gossip of the capital. She wanted to know who everybody was and why they were what they were, and she could not have

gone to a better guide than Guthrie. He had the entire history of the State at his fingers' ends—not only its general history, but its family and personal story as well. He knew every man of importance in the State and his record, and he explained the character of all these people whom she had met in the capital and showed their political and personal relations to each other. While he was yet telling her these things, he turned and drove back over the road by which they had come, wishing to reach the capital at twilight. As the first faint tinge of dark appeared in the eastern sky they became silent. They were back among the hills again, and below them they saw the silver streak of the river. Clarice was impressed by the silence and loneliness of the world, but it was a loneliness without fear. It gave her, too, a stronger feeling of comradeship with Guthrie—a comradeship reaching a point where conversation was not necessary.

The red light from the setting sun blazed across the brown oaks, and covered the departing world with fire. Clarice shook herself a little. She would not yield to such feelings. She preferred to talk when she was driving with a young man at the approach of twilight, no matter who that young man might be.

"My mind goes back to Mr. Pike," she said. "I am still wondering about that little scene on the raft."

"I cannot guess what it meant," said Guthrie.

In another hour they were in the capital and Guthrie left her at the door of the Governor's house.

"I have enjoyed my drive," she said sincerely, as she bade him good night. "I think I am beginning to feel the spell of the place!"

CHAPTER VII

AT MOUNT EAGLE

A FEW hours later Clarice Ransome, Mary Pelham, and Lucy Hastings were sitting by the fire in Clarice's room, lingering there a while before they went to bed. The wood fires are one of the chief delights of this old-fashioned house; there is such a plenty of wood and they burn with such a lively blaze and such a fine crackle that, in these last luxurious minutes before yielding to sleep, one has to be a resolute pessimist indeed to feel gloomy! Moreover, at such a time people grow retrospective and seeing the past through a mellowed glow like to talk about it. Then they cast up the day's accounts.

The evening had been quiet and they were willing that it should be so. The young governor was still in his office at the Capitol, looking over papers—applications for the pardon of convicts, legislative measures requiring his signature or veto, and all the great bulk of business that must pass through a governor's hands. At this time of the year he often stayed at his office until two or three o'clock in the morning.

"Did you have a pleasant drive, Clarice?" asked Lucy Hastings.

"Very," Clarice replied without any attempt at concealment, and even with a trace of enthusiasm. "The country was beautiful—you know how

beautiful it can be in winter—I even thought it looked romantic.”

Mary Pelham smiled faintly, but said nothing.

“And Mr. Guthrie?” asked Lucy, “How do you like him?”

“I know that he is a particular friend of the Governor and yourself,” replied Clarice, “and hence I am afraid not to like him. But, really, I do like him for himself.”

She paused, and gazed thoughtfully into the coals, which were forming themselves into glowing castles and churches. The other two said nothing.

“Yes, I like him for his own sake,” she continued, her voice as meditative as her gaze. “He seemed to me a little odd in several particulars—neglecting some of the things that are valued by the people to whom I am accustomed, but—he might be taught.”

“I have no doubt that he can learn,” replied Lucy quietly, “that is, if he should have the right kind of a teacher.”

Mary Pelham smiled again, but Clarice did not notice it; she was still gazing into the red coals, and her mind was somewhere else.

“You spoke of the Count’s coming to America soon,” said Lucy, who had, to a singular degree, the gift of mild tenacity. “Has he decided?”

A slight frown appeared on Clarice’s face, and in a moment she was ashamed of herself because the mention of Raoul’s name had disturbed her. Then she created his image in her mind’s eye and she smiled.

Raoul’s gayety, his easy manners, his unimpeachable taste in neckties, the easy grace that he showed in any position, appealed to her. He pleased her eye because



“I know that he is a particular friend of the Governor and yourself,” replied Clarice, “hence I am afraid not to like him.”

he not only looked well in any place, but was also ornamental. And then, too, as her mother had said truly, he was of such an old family. His ancestors had served in three of the Crusades, and there was royal blood half a dozen generations back—it was not well to inquire too closely into its origin—but it was there. She remembered how easy and restful Raoul was. She forgot that time when she had the faintest suspicion that he believed himself to have condescended, and she felt a desire to see him again—he bothered her with no troublesome questions.

“He is coming,” she responded at last, “but I do not know definitely when it will be; in the spring, perhaps.”

“If he comes this winter, I hope that you will bring him down here,” said Lucy. “If he really wants to see our American life, he cannot see it in the small circles of our large cities. There, I hear Paul’s footsteps, so I’ll tell you good night.”

She went out leaving Clarice and Mary together. Mary sat only a minute or two, but when she arose and reached the door, she said,

“I admire Mr. Guthrie for many things, and most of all because of his devotion to his friends.”

Then she went out before Clarice could reply.

Guthrie, meanwhile, had gone to his dinner after leaving the Governor’s house, and then he strolled into the lobby of the hotel, the news-centre of the capital. He quickly saw that he would have but little to add to his brief despatch filed in the afternoon, and, when he returned from the telegraph office to the hotel, he was joined by Tommy Newlands, the assistant clerk of the House.

"There's no news here, Billy," said Newlands, slipping his arm into Guthrie's, an act that Guthrie never liked. "Don't waste your time, but come up to my room; I've got something really important."

Tommy was a slender youth with mild blue eyes, a confiding air, and the most honest face in the world; and he spoke with so much earnestness and impressiveness that Guthrie was persuaded and went with him.

"I'll tell you what it is when we get there," said Tommy in a mysterious whisper.

His room was across the street in a boarding-house, and, when they reached it, Tommy carefully locked themselves in, and put the key in his pocket. Then he produced a large portfolio from a bureau drawer, waved Guthrie to a chair, and took another himself.

"Just listen to it, Billy," he said, smiling his child-like smile, "I wrote it all to-day, and I think it's the best I've ever done."

Guthrie arose in alarm, and his brow became menacing.

"Look you, Tommy Newlands!" he cried. "Have you brought me over here and locked me up in your room in order that you may force me to listen to your original poetry?"

"Why, Billy," exclaimed Newlands, "I intended that you should be the very first to hear it."

"I'd rather be the last," said Guthrie defiantly. "But answer me one question, Tommy. Have you ever had a line of your poetry published?"

"Not yet," replied Newlands confidently, "but the last editor who returned my verses wrote me that they contained promise, though they were not exactly suited

to his needs. I think that looks favourable, don't you?"

"Oh, yes—from your point of view. But I won't listen to any of it until it is published. It takes the edge off either prose or poetry to hear it read in manuscript. It's so much better in print."

"But we are here, and everything is so handy," entreated Newlands.

"No, I won't stand for it, and, if you don't produce that key and unlock the door at once, I'll say in the *Times* that you're the very worst assistant clerk of the House the Legislature has known in a history of more than a hundred years."

"You wouldn't do that, Billy?" pleaded Newlands.

"I would," replied Guthrie gravely. "Just think of the alternative, Tommy!"

Newlands reluctantly produced the key, and unlocked the door.

"I thought to find in you a sympathetic soul. We are both writers, you know," he said reproachfully.

"One of us isn't," said Guthrie. "Tommy, I'm your friend, as you know, but you mustn't take advantage of me. As a matter of fact, I think you are an admirable assistant clerk of the House—you write such a nice, round hand. Now, come along. Let's go over to the hotel, and talk politics."

"I do not care for politics," said Newlands. "It's a coarse and common subject. It does not appeal to one's finer nature. I do my work in the House because I want my bread, but I take no other interest in it whatever. Neither do I care for those common and pushing men about us. A higher type appeals to me."

Guthrie laughed. He was only a year older than

Tommy Newlands, but he felt as if the difference were ten years instead of one. Tommy with his desire to shun all the hard knocks—with his instinct always to confound strength with mere roughness, seemed to him to have in him something womanish, for which Guthrie felt contempt; yet he liked him, his amiability and honesty.

"Come, Tommy," he repeated. "These are much better people than you think. Men in working clothes look rougher than those in evening dress, but it may be looks only. Come, it will do you good."

But Newlands was obstinate; they could neither amuse nor instruct him, he said, and Guthrie leaving him returned to the hotel. Jimmy Warfield was sitting in a corner, singularly silent for him, but he gave Guthrie a slight signal, and then strolled quietly into the hall. After a discreet wait, Guthrie followed, and the two walked down the long hall to the side entrance where they were alone.

"Billy," said Warfield, "if I give you an important piece of news, will you pledge your word not to use it to-night."

"Are you sure that I could not get it except from you?"

"Quite sure."

"I'm released from my promise, if anybody else should come to me of his own volition and tell it to me?"

"Certainly."

"All right; I promise. What is it?"

Warfield showed slight signs of agitation. "Billy," he said, "they are going to impeach Carton, or try it."

Guthrie looked incredulous.

"Why, that's moonshine!" he said. "Such a thing

was never done in this State—not even under the worst political or factional pressure!”

“It’s going to be tried all the same,” said Warfield with emphasis, “and I tell you, Mr. William Guthrie, it will stir this State from centre to circumference! Carton, with his high and haughty ways, has made lots of enemies, and besides there are many men against him in this matter who believe he has done wrong. I’ve got it from a straight source; it’s absolutely true, and it’s coming quick.”

“Does Carton know of it?”

“Not yet; that’s what I want to talk to you about. Oughtn’t we to warn him? If we don’t, the thing is likely to burst upon him and catch him unprepared, and then, without time to think, he’s likely to do something hot-tempered and rash.”

“Where is he?” asked Guthrie.

“In his room. He came into the lobby about eight o’clock, and spent half an hour—as lordly as you please—then he stalked off upstairs. But I walked down the hall in front of his room fifteen minutes ago, and I saw the light shining under his door. I know that he’s sitting there, glowering. They’ve struck him in two ways: they are threatening him with the ruin of all his political ambitions, and Mary Pelham’s folks, since they’ve heard of this thing, are putting all sorts of pressure on her to make her give him up.”

“Come on,” said Guthrie, always ready to act in an emergency. “I think we’d better tell him at once.”

The light was still shining under Carton’s door, and Guthrie knocked briskly, but received no answer.

“Let us in, Carton,” shouted Warfield through the

keyhole. "It is Guthrie and I, Guthrie and Warfield, and we must speak to you."

"Come in!" replied Carton, and, pushing open the door, they entered.

Carton was sitting at the window, looking vaguely out at the darkness. Warfield had surmised truly: he was "glowering." But Guthrie's first sensation was of pity. Carton's pride seemed to have slipped from him for the moment while he was sitting there alone, and his attitude was full of depression and despair. That one so strong should feel crushed and show it gave Guthrie a painful thrill.

Guthrie and Warfield exchanged glances. Warfield's asked: "Is it the Speakership or the girl?" and Guthrie's replied: "Both." Carton turned his head wearily.

"Boys," he said, "it's good of you to come here and see me."

"Well," replied Warfield cheerily, "you look so gay and frivolous, sitting there by the window, that we think we ought to have a share in the sport."

"You're welcome to all the fun that's going," said Carton, smiling. "But sit down."

"They seated themselves and then there were a few moments of embarrassed silence, because Carton glanced at them inquiringly, as if he wished to know why they came, seeing at once that it was no mere social visit. Warfield looked at Guthrie, and Guthrie looked at Warfield. At last Jimmy cleared his throat defiantly, as much as to say: "*I will* speak even if what I say *is* unwelcome!"

"Look here, Phil, you know that Billy and I are good friends of yours," he began irrelevantly, "and

you've got lots more friends in the Legislature and throughout the State."

"Now I know that your news is personal to me and unpleasant," said Carton, speaking clearly and decisively. Suddenly he put on his fighting habit. His figure expanded and stiffened, and his look was challenging.

"It is both," said Guthrie.

"Then," said Carton, "I thank you two for coming to me with it, because I know that you come to warn me and stand by me and not to hurt me."

"That's so!" said Warfield, feeling great relief. Then he continued: "Now, Phil, I won't tell you just how I found this out, but it is true. This fight on you is even bolder and more bitter than you think it is. Your enemies—and I don't know just who is leading them—are going to push it to the utmost. They are going to try to expel you, to impeach you, not merely to drive you from the House, but to disfranchise you, to deprive you of your rights as a citizen."

"Why, such a thing was never done in this State!" exclaimed Carton, unconsciously repeating Guthrie's own comment.

"I know it, but they mean to do it now, if they can," said Warfield.

"And I should be a marked man all my life, a pariah!" exclaimed Carton, for the moment aghast. But in another moment all his courage returned. "They can't do it!" he said.

"No," said Jimmy Warfield, "we'll give 'em a fight they'll never forget!"

"I think I can swing the *Times*," said Guthrie.

Carton, despite his effort to control himself, showed

agitation, and walked back and forth in the room. He saw clearly that his personal happiness and his whole political future alike were at stake. Everything told him to be cautious, to show the wisdom of the serpent, but also every instinct in him rose against the use of what is called diplomacy. He wanted to speak out against these men, to tell Pursley just what he thought of him and to defy him. But he was conscious, too, that Guthrie and Warfield were watching him, and while he could have ridden rough-shod over Warfield's opinion, he hesitated when confronted by Guthrie.

Yet Guthrie did not say much; he felt himself to be to a certain extent an outsider—that is, he was not really a part of the Legislature, his mission in the capital being the collection of news. Hence by suggestion and brief interjected words he pointed out to Warfield the line of argument he should adopt with Carton.

Under the deft hand of his second, Warfield gave good advice. The other side, he said, was showing craft and cunning at every stage of the battle; their forces had been masked from the beginning and were still masked; no hostile hand was yet in sight save Pursley's; he was trumpeter, standard-bearer, vanguard—everything so far; Carton then should not waste his temper and his strength striking at an invisible foe.

Warfield had the gift of smooth speech by indirection if he chose, and under his persuasive words, Carton dismissed the slight agitation that he had shown.

"Boys," he said, at last, "I don't know how I ever can reward you for the way that you stand by me."

His words were brief but full of feeling. Warfield laughed and said lightly:

"Nonsense, if I ever get into trouble I expect you to do at least five times as much for me."

They left him and again he sat down by the window and began to gaze vaguely into the darkness.

The second day following was Saturday, and an excursion had been arranged to Mount Eagle, the great stock-farm in the very finest part of the lowlands, about fifteen miles from the capital. This noble place is the pride of the State. Covering thousands of acres of gently rolling hills and valleys, it is unsurpassed for beauty and fertility. Here since the early days have been bred race-horses that sell for their weight in silver and more, and their fame has extended over the world. Here breeders from all parts of the Union come to renew the original and powerful strains of blood. The sideboards in the house are covered with plate, won on a hundred courses, and, in a State which has the inborn love of horses, people go every year as to a shrine to see the stall in which was born the colt that successively broke the world's one-, two-, three-, and four-mile records. The owners never bet on their own horses, but run them for pride and glory.

A number of members of the Legislature, ladies of the political families, and other guests had been invited to Saturday luncheon at Mount Eagle—the Legislature never meets on Saturday. Guthrie was on the list, and so was Tommy Newlands. Five carriages, of different types but sufficient to carry twenty-four people, had been engaged, and the start was to be made from the hotel at eight o'clock of a beautiful frosty morning.

Guthrie was early at the meeting-place, glad of the excursion and the holiday after a week that he had

found trying. Moreover, he would be with the people and the kind of society that he liked best, and he expected enjoyment.

The Governor and his wife with Miss Pelham and Miss Ransome in their train arrived in a few minutes, and they exchanged joyous greetings, for they were young, and their spirits rose in the cold, crisp morning. Then came the gigantic United States Senator, Mr. Dennison, willingly following the lead of his much younger wife, and after them the Speaker and Jimmy Warfield, and Tommy Newlands, and Senator Cobb, and Mr. Pike, and others, until they formed a noisy, talkative group on the hotel steps.

Guthrie glanced at Carton. The Speaker and Mary Pelham had greeted each other in a rather constrained, formal manner, but Guthrie was perhaps the only one who had noticed it, and the Speaker here in the presence of Mary showed no care in his face. All the vehicles were filled except the last, a tally-ho with seats for six persons.

"Is not everybody here?" asked Carton, one of the little group still standing on the steps.

"No," said the driver, "there is one more gentleman to come," and at that moment the gentleman, in heavy fur overcoat, fur gloves, and sealskin cap, appeared—no less a personage than the Honourable Mr. Pursley.

"How does he happen to be here?" exclaimed Carton, but in a low voice. Guthrie divined at once that the owners of Mount Eagle, not knowing Mr. Pursley as he was, had invited him under the impression that he was a leader in the House—a fact, within its limits.

All the other carriages had gone on, and there was an embarrassed pause. Those left upon the steps

under the deft manipulation of Mrs. Dennison were Miss Ransome, Miss Pelham, Carton, Jimmy Warfield, and Guthrie. The ladies knowing the state of affairs looked apprehensively at the Speaker and Mr. Pursley, but Guthrie in a moment seized the occasion, and ruthlessly sacrificed his friend Jimmy Warfield, as the good-natured are always put to the knife.

"You and Jimmy are to sit together, Mr. Pursley," he said cherrily; "now up with you two there into the seat next to the driver!" and he half pushed them into place. Then he helped Miss Ransome into the next seat and sat beside her, while the seat behind was left for Miss Pelham and the Speaker. Then the horses rattled away at a swift trot, and Guthrie congratulated himself on his diplomacy. Mr. Pursley was safely stowed next to a man who did not know how to be anything but polite and cheerful, while he and Miss Ransome sat as a guard between the Speaker and his pet hatred. Then his spirits rose still further. He relished a dramatic situation, and, after all, the presence of Pursley lent to the excursion a spice which it would have otherwise lacked. It would rest with him and Jimmy Warfield to keep the peace between Carton and Pursley for a whole day and to enjoy themselves at the same time—a task to arouse ambition.

So Guthrie talked much more than usual and in a lighter manner than was his custom until Clarice Ransome said,

"Mr. Guthrie, I did not know you could be so frivolous!"

Jimmy Warfield, twisting his neck, turned a solemn countenance.

"It's only his true nature coming out, Miss Ran-

some," he said; "he's the official humourist of the *Times*."

"That's the reason they send me to report the Legislature," said Guthrie.

"Because they know his reports will be a joke," said Warfield.

"No, to report a joke," said Guthrie.

"I will have no fighting," said Clarice in mock alarm, "between the Fourth Estate and, and——"

"The lost estate," replied Guthrie.

"Oh, well, as a body we have our redeeming qualities!" said Warfield. "At least we are a refuge. You know, Miss Ransome, down in some of the country counties, when they develop a smart young lawyer that they're a bit afraid of, the old farmers get together and say, 'We'll just send him to the Legislature where he can't do us any harm, but can do the other fellers.'"

"And did they send you here on that account, Mr. Warfield?" asked Clarice serenely.

Warfield held up his hands in horror.

"Behold my importance!" he said. "I hail from the city, and Carton is continually recognising me as the gentleman from the Third Ward, but Miss Ransome does not remember it a day."

"Jimmy, you must speak twice as often as you do, and get noticed," said Guthrie.

"Do you want him to exclude all the others?" asked Carton.

"I hope he'll leave a few minutes for me," said Mr. Pursley, with the evident intention of being amiable.

"I'll do it," said Warfield. "I'm thinking of never making another speech again. There was a fellow

here last session from one of the western counties. He never opened his mouth the whole session, but you could fairly see his reputation for wisdom growing. People said that when Horton of Bond County did speak, he would say something. He never did speak, but it made no difference. People said, 'Just you wait; look what an amount of reserve strength is there!' Now, I had been speaking brilliantly all the session, saying solid truths in the most terse, epigrammatic and illuminating manner, and I got no praise at all, and, instead of me, the Legislature elected Carton to the Speakership this term. But, after all, that's no credit to him. In a legislature, ladies, a Speaker is the only man who can't speak; so always, in order to suppress him and for the general credit, we elect the worst talker of us all to that position."

There was a general laugh, but Mary Pelham said:

"Two weeks ago, I read a speech by Mr. Carton in the *Times*; how do you account for that Mr. Warfield?"

"Carton never made that speech," Warfield replied, "It was written by Guthrie there and attributed to him, and, as it rather took with the people, Phil accepts it. We're all in the secret here, at the capital, but, of course, we can't betray a fellow-member. It's like that jury out in one of the mountain counties where they are rather fond of shooting at each other. They were trying a man for severely wounding one of his neighbours; there was no doubt about the shooting—the man didn't even deny it, but the jury returned a verdict of acquittal, and when the astonished judge asked them why, the foreman replied: 'Of course he is guilty—we all know that—but if, in a little case

like this, we fellows don't stand together, what's to become of our privileges?"

"It's lucky that Mr. Pike is in the next carriage!" said Guthrie.

"Oh! I should have located that story in the lowlands, if he had been here," replied Warfield airily, "but it tells the truth about the mountaineers, all the same. They won't give up their feuds because it's a time-honoured custom, and, if you were to dissect Mr. Pike himself, you would find this feeling right in his marrow."

The driver increased his speed a little, and in a few moments they overtook the next carriage in which Mr. Pike was sitting, silent and solemn. Jimmy Warfield upbraided him for his melancholy looks, and Mrs. Dennison replied for him that it was due to his being a Republican.

"It's his conscience!" said Jimmy Warfield, "I don't see how any man can be a Republican and have a sound conscience!"

Mr. Pike was the only Republican in the party, and they jested with him at some length on the bad complexion of his politics, all of which he took in good part, merely replying that he was in the midst of enemies. Guthrie was struck by his use of the phrase "in the midst of enemies," and by the underlying sadness in Mr. Pike's eyes. He remembered, too, the scene on the raft, and he was sure the mountain member was really in trouble. But no one else noticed, so good was Mr. Pike's concealment, and the excursion was all high spirits—even Carton and Pursley, separated by the craft and guile of Guthrie and Warfield, forgot their enmity, and Carton, from

sympathy as well as pride, joined in the flow of geniality.

From the crest of a gentle slope, they caught the first view of Mount Eagle and its five thousand acres within a ring fence of stone. The frosty sun glistened in alternate streaks of silver and gold on the white walls and the red roofs of buildings, and before them, mile after mile of hill and valley, lay the pleasant country, beautiful even in the winter robe of brown. It told everywhere of fertility and comfort.

"I don't wonder that the Indians hated to give it up," said Mary Pelham.

"The Indians never had it," said Jimmy Warfield with his usual vivacity. "It's one of the weaknesses of an advancing civilisation, Miss Pelham, to lament the passing of a hideous, painted savage, and to delude itself with the idea that it has committed a crime in planting enlightenment in the place of barbarism. As a matter of fact, the northern and southern tribes merely met and fought here and this land was occupied by nobody. Here we are now; this is the gate that leads to Mount Eagle."

They drove over a white road between a noble avenue of trees toward the house, a great rambling structure of stone, redolent of ease and dignity.

"It reminds me of an old château in France," said Clarice Ransome.

"Only this is our own," said Guthrie.

"I begin to think that you are very much of a patriot," said Clarice.

"So I am," replied Guthrie, "and I give you fair warning, Miss Ransome, that a lot of us mean to make you one, too."

"I am already making more progress than I anticipated," she replied frankly.

"And here we are at the house," said Jimmy Warfield, "and there stand our host and hostess on the steps."

Guthrie helped Clarice out of the carriage, and her fingers tingled slightly even through her gloves, when his hand clasped hers. Had Guthrie been looking, he would have seen a faint colour rise in her face. Then Clarice took a resolve: she had been too much with Guthrie, and she would make the return journey in another carriage. She began to have a suspicion that she was being managed by somebody, and she resented it. Nevertheless, Guthrie was by her side as the guests were received, and thus they passed into the house.

They were in a wide hall, running the full length of the building—a wall hung with portraits and the stuffed heads of deer and bison. In open rooms on either side, great fires roared and crackled in wide fireplaces.

"To enjoy this fully one must have driven fifteen miles in the cold as we have done," said Jimmy Warfield.

The men turned off to the right and the women to the left. The men closed the door behind them when they entered a room in which a fire was roaring and the black servants were already clinking the glasses.

"This is glorious after a long ride in the cold," said Jimmy Warfield. "Here's to all our healths!"

When they had refreshed themselves, they met the ladies again in the hall, and began their trip about the place, the stables being the first point of departure. It was Clarice's plan to go with the Senator and Mrs.

Dennison, but she found herself, instead, between Guthrie and Mr. Pike, and she did not know how long Mr. Pike would stay. She was not sure whether Guthrie or some one else had managed it. She yielded, but was displeased with herself because she did not feel more reluctance at yielding.

"We shall see some of the most famous horses in the world," said Guthrie, "but, to be perfectly frank with you, most horses look alike to me."

In a State devoted to the horse, Guthrie was not a zealous horseman. He looked upon the horse as merely one of the adjuncts of human life, not its main interest; but he enjoyed looking at them in a place such as this, where they were cherished like children. In the first stall, and gazing at the visitors out of mild incurious eyes, was the bay stallion that had won as a two-year-old the great Futurity in New York, and the next year both the Brooklyn Handicap and the Suburban.

"He's got lots more sense than some people, and he's as gentle as a child," said the black trainer.

Clarice held out some oats, and the lazy king of a horse nibbled them gently from her hand.

"Of course, no horse would hurt you, Miss Ransome," said Jimmy Warfield.

Thus they paused, from stall to stall, inspecting the kings and queens of the turf, some resting between campaigns, others with all their campaigns done and looking, as they placidly chewed their oats, as if they were meditating over old triumphs. Then they went into the pasture where the grass still lingered on the sunny slopes, and examined the youngsters with their victories yet to come.

"The older horses in the stables impress me the

most," said Mrs. Dennison. "What if one could see the ablest men and women collected in one company in that manner! It ought at least to make an interesting society."

"More likely it would be as dull as ditch-water!" said Jimmy Warfield. "Everybody in it would be bored to death by everybody else!"

Then they went in to luncheon. Guthrie always remembers that luncheon with the keenest of pleasure. He was in the best of company; he was hungry and his cares had rolled away. All the tables had been spread in the larger dining-room, and they were covered with a "hunter's luncheon," that is, with a luncheon reminiscent of the State's early days, as they had been told would be the case when the invitations were sent. There were partridges, wild turkeys, venison from the mountains, bear from Mississippi, trout and perch from the State's own streams, all flanked by liquids of every kind.

"I foresee a better business than making dry speeches in the House!" said Jimmy Warfield.

Clarice's conscience began to hurt her again, and, by careful planning, she found herself in a seat between Senator Cobb and Tommy Newlands. Guthrie was some distance away, but biding his time. Lucy Hastings was on his right, and, with an intuitive sense of what was wise under the circumstances, he was scrupulous in his attention to her. Clarice observed him, and by and by she was sorry that his glance did not meet hers. She was conscious now that there had always been something solid and interesting in Guthrie's talk; she always had the feeling afterward that it had been stimulating, and now, by contrast, the

chatter of Tommy Newlands seemed unusually light, frothy, and vapid.

Tommy had a soul with a large S. He could not abide the raw and crude. Strength appealed to him less than form. In fiction, he preferred the small parlour-scenes of life, the tea-table tragedies, which loomed very large to him, and in poetry his soul turned with an infinite longing to the *vers de société*. He had never been abroad, but the Old World contained for him all there was of art and architecture, and hence Tommy amid his surroundings was *blasé* and cynical to a degree that often entertained.

"I should like to live in a house like this," said Clarice to him in the course of their conversation.

"I understand that it has the architecture of all nations and the beauty of none," replied Tommy.

"I do not see why that matters," said Clarice, "if it is beautiful, then the rules do not count."

Senator Cobb on the other side of her looked puzzled. He had spent a life wrestling with men, and to him these things seemed unimportant. The blood of the old Indian-fighters was yet in his veins, and the battle of life had little to do with architecture.

"I should think that the first question was comfort," he said, "and it appears that they have attained it here."

But Tommy could scarcely conceal his scorn—these rude men from the hills always jarred upon his finer fibre. He had a cult, and, as for himself, he said, he was fond of the beauty of life. He preferred the fine, the minute, the indirect, the delicate shadings, to the abrupt and obvious. Americans were too material; he was often ashamed of his countrymen, for they neg-

lected the essence in favour of the substance. Most of the men were well enough in their way, but it must be confessed that they represented a low order of development. Those who had the true spirit always pined for something higher.

Clarice listened in some amusement. She read Tommy Newlands at once. She saw the lack of earnestness in all that he said, and knew that it was an affectation, although Tommy himself believed it to be vital and real; it was a feeble growth upon a feeble stem. But Senator Cobb, whose experience of the world was in some sense inferior to Clarice's, was not amused. At first he was ashamed for Tommy, and then he became angry. At last he said impatiently,

"Then I take it, Mr. Newlands, that you would rather live on air than on roast beef!"

"I was not speaking of so material a thing as the physical appetite," replied Tommy. "I was referring to the finer and more subtle things that are the *nuances* of life."

Senator Cobb did not know what "*nuances*" meant, but his keen mind enabled him to guess.

"Is a continent like this to be won with men of the type you like?" he asked.

But Tommy flew the question. Life in the older countries where everything had settled into its appointed place appealed to him; there was more poetry in a bit of ivy on an old wall than in any contest that ever took place in a Legislature, and thus he rambled on to his great satisfaction. But Senator Cobb shook his head disapprovingly; it did not seem to him that Tommy was dealing with the stuff of which our lives are made.

Clarice was glad when Jimmy Warfield on the other

side of the table came to their relief. Warfield beneath all his lightness and good nature had a penetrating mind: his feet never left the earth nor did his head reach the clouds. His nimble satire played around Tommy with such an easy touch that the expounder of a cult was not aware for some time that he was a target. When he saw it at last he said little more, because he had an instinctive fear of Warfield, whom he regarded as one of those rough beings without a subconscious soul.

The luncheon was finished, and then they heard the great organ in the music-room, the finest in the State. Guthrie was really fond of music, a science of whose theory and art he knew nothing, and did not wish to know anything. It appealed to him as a melodious voice expressing many emotions, and the knowledge of how it was produced would detract from the charm of hearing it. But he never talked about his love of music; he indulged in no cant, and he advocated no school. Therefore, he was able to enjoy.

Clarice wandered away from Tommy Newlands, finding that his "protection" had become a burden. His chatter ceased to be amusing, and, when Guthrie took the vacant chair beside her, she neither indicated nor felt any objection. After all, it was a pleasure to return to him, because here was something tangible and solid upon which one could get a mental grasp. Guthrie said nothing, as the music had begun, and Clarice, too, was soon affected by the solemnity and majesty of the organ tones.

She glanced presently at Guthrie's face, and she was astonished at the change she saw there. He had impressed her hitherto as one so intensely in the present

that he had no time for dreams or reflections. Now he was far away on the wings of fancy, and, after all, he did have imagination, ideality, and sentiment. She, too, was modern and practical; but the springs of romance were not dry within her, and she liked this new phase that she beheld in Guthrie, softening and refining him to a woman's standard.

"Music of that type," said Guthrie when they were leaving the room, "is the only thing that can bring absolute forgetfulness of the world besides. It really takes one quite out of oneself."

He said it simply, quite without affectation—so simply that no reply was needed, and they walked together into the drawing-room. For the moment, Count Raoul d'Estournelle, and his coming visit to America were forgotten by both.

"We shall start on the return journey in an hour," said Guthrie, "and I hope that you will permit me to occupy the same seat in the carriage beside you. I feel that I am in some sense your guide, and also to save trouble in rearranging the party, it was decided that we should go back just as we came."

"Then why ask me when it is my orders to say yes?"

Guthrie laughed.

"I want you to be a willing victim and to admit it," he replied.

She smiled but did not say no, and left him to get her wraps. Out of his presence, her conscience assailed her once more. She had firmly resolved not to be his immediate company on the return journey; she had broken her resolve, and it not two hours old! She felt once more that she was doing a wrong to Raoul, and she could see her mother's cold, disapproving eye.

She comforted herself with the old and convenient proverb that, in Rome, one must do as the Romans do, and, as she was thrown with this group, she must accept in it the *rôle* that chance seemed to have marked for her.

Guthrie turned down the narrow hall toward the room set aside for the men, where his overcoat was hanging, and saw a broad figure just ahead of him. The figure belonged to Mr. Pursley, and he was hailing Carton who stood in front of a picture near the doorway.

"It would be pleasant, wouldn't it Carton, to have a place like this?" he said with an air of friendliness.

Carton did not reply, but studied the picture more intently than ever; and Mr. Pursley, who was delicate neither of perception nor sensibility, repeated his remark. Then Carton turned about, his face white with anger, and his figure stiffening into the haughty pose with which Guthrie was so familiar.

"Pursley," he exclaimed, "I cannot say that I hate you—that dignifies you too much, but I do despise you. I told you once before that I wished you not to speak to me again."

"I regarded it as the request of a foolish young man," placidly replied Mr. Pursley, whose great strength lay in his ability to keep his temper under any circumstances.

Helplessness was added to Carton's look of anger. His eyes plainly asked, "What can I do when confronted by such a man?" At last he said lamely:

"Pursley, whenever I undertake to go anywhere, I shall find out whether you are going, and then I shall stay away."

Pursley laughed, and sauntered into the room in search of his coat, leaving Carton frowning with chagrin. Guthrie took Carton by the arm.

"Phil, old man," he said—they were great friends, and Carton himself was under thirty—"would you mind a little piece of advice from me? The looker-on, you know, is always in a better position to judge than the actor."

Carton frowned again, but reluctantly subdued his pride, and consented.

"It's this," said Guthrie. "It's not worth while to attack a man like Pursley with words. His thick skin turns them off like water. Besides, he's a member of the House where you will have to meet him almost every day, and you give him an advantage when you lose your tongue and he keeps his."

"Billy," said Carton, "it hurts me to hear you say this—hurts me that any one should think it necessary to say such things to me, but I suppose it is true. The very sight of the man infuriates me; I cannot help it."

"Let's get our overcoats," said Guthrie quietly. "I think the others are about ready for the start."

They entered the room together, and no other present save Mr. Pursley knew of the brief encounter. Guthrie put on his overcoat and went out on the step in front of which the carriages were waiting.

"I offer you my condolences, old man," said Tommy Newlands, clapping his hand on Guthrie's shoulder.

"Why so?" asked Guthrie.

"Because Miss Ransome is going to sit by me on the way back home. I have just asked her for the privilege and she has consented."

"See here, Tommy," said Guthrie, "You can't cut

me out in that fashion. Miss Ransome has an engagement with me, and I won't let her break it, even if I have to kidnap her."

Tommy looked at him aghast.

"But she said I could have the seat!" he remonstrated.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Guthrie briskly. "She forgot, for the moment, her engagement with me. Ah! Miss Ransome, the carriage is waiting for us and here is our place."

She had appeared that moment upon the steps, her cheeks rosy with the day's exercise, and her eyes seeking Tommy Newlands. She had resolved at the last moment that she would break her unspoken word, escape from Guthrie, and sacrifice herself to Tommy. But she was caught by the fowler in his net; almost before she was aware of it, Guthrie was assisting her into the carriage, and the next moment he was in the seat beside her, while the poet was left lamenting on the steps.

"Mr. Guthrie," said Clarice, "do you know that I accepted Mr. Newlands' escort home?"

"It was very wrong of you," replied Guthrie gravely, "to make a promise which, you see, you could not keep. Moreover, I claim to be quite as good company as Tommy Newlands."

Clarice was silent, overborne by him—and yet she liked his masterful ways. Had he asked again for the place, she would not have given it to him; but, as he took it without asking, she was reconciled. She had once more the singular feeling of relief that a strong personality brings.

The drive home was quieter, as the return always is.

The winter twilight fell long before they reached the capital. The sun sank in the west and the dusk came in, fold on fold, like a blanket over the sky, but the moonlight glittered like silver through it on the brown woods and the hills. All the world was brooding and peaceful.

"I think sometimes that winter is as beautiful as summer," said Clarice.

"It is," replied Guthrie, "both in its own way and because it is the omen of that which is to come. What is it that Shelley says—'if winter come, can spring be far behind?'"

Clarice looked up at the star-shot sky.

"Yes," she said, "that is it—after sorrow, joy."

All of them were quiet and subdued when they reached the capital, and bade each other good night.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CASE AGAINST CARTON

It was Guthrie's unpleasant duty the next day to send a despatch, stating that the House would endeavour to impeach its Speaker, Philip Carton, a young man of obscure parentage, who had been held up to the boys of the State during the last three or four years as a model of what might be achieved in the land of opportunity.

The news was beginning to filter through other sources, and he was released from his promise to Warfield. Senator Cobb told him of it, Mr. Pike brought him the story, and it came, too, from many other sources.

Guthrie was informed also that the powers behind Pursley, as Jimmy Warfield had said, would not try for mere expulsion, but for impeachment in due form, carrying with it if successful the loss of citizenship. The House by a two-thirds vote might expel any of its members, but an impeachment would have to be laid before the Senate, which would resolve itself into a trial court, and if a two-thirds majority could be secured, would find the Speaker guilty and drive him in disgrace from the Legislature.

It was with a heavy heart and pen that Guthrie wrote these things. He knew Carton's faults, but he was confident of his absolute rectitude, although he

could not overlook the formidable forces arrayed against him and the belief in his guilt—or at least fault—entertained by many who really liked him.

The next day the *Times* and all the other newspapers of the State contained sensational despatches from the capital. Carton would be put on trial, and the necessary methods of procedure foreshadowed a long and desperate fight. The whole State was eager for the least scrap of news about it, and at once parties formed; nor were these parties always political. Men did not divide on the old Republican and Democratic lines. It became a personal question, and for the moment the public lost sight of the possible action of the Republican minority in both House and Senate. Yet it was a minority which at the crisis might wield the balance of power.

Nor was the feeling in the State wholly of displeasure. It is a State that loves a political fight—particularly if it is waged about a personality; and, when this personality was of such prominence as the Speaker of the House, and the case was so unusual, then the promise for a lively winter was very good indeed. The newspapers would be filled with interesting reading, and, as they followed the evidence, would also discuss hotly the question of Carton's guilt or innocence. To the whole population, it would be a great battle with themselves as the spectators and the capital as the arena.

At the capital, however, many men were occupied with other things than the mere panoramic effect of the battle. This question of the Republican minority was to them an immediate and pressing matter. They recognised at once the power of the Republicans, but

they were unable to say what that party would do with it. Would they follow the evidence and divide according to their personal views, or would they act as a solid political body? And, even in the latter case, another question arose—would they be for Carton or against him? By either course, they could inflict damage upon the prestige of the Democratic party; that is, by proving their Speaker to be a scoundrel, or by saving an innocent man from the rage of a Democratic mob.

There were eight Republican members of the Senate and thirty-seven of the House, coming chiefly from the mountains, and Guthrie was quite sure that, when the fight grew hot, Mr. Pike would be their leader. Mr. Pike was his very good friend and, therefore, he sought him.

The Senator was in his room in a bleak boarding-house—all the mountain members were poor, and invariably they had poor quarters—but he gave Guthrie a sincere welcome. Guthrie noticed at once that the mountaineer looked troubled. He pulled his whiskers nervously, and gazed absently out of the window.

"Mr. Pike," said Guthrie, "I've come to interview you."

"All right, go ahead," said Mr. Pike, with a faint smile. "What is it you want to know? About the prospects for the next wheat crop in the mountains? Well, there won't be any; we don't raise wheat."

"It's a political crop that I'm talking about. You know the charges against Carton—a man whom you like."

"Yes, I like him," said Mr. Pike meditatively, as he polished his whiskers with his left hand.

"And as a Republican you are perhaps in a rather unusual position, so far as this case is concerned."

"Yes, in a delicate position—like a boy balancing himself on the sharp edge of a fence-rail."

Guthrie smiled. The homely simile reminded him a little of Abraham Lincoln.

"Still," he said, "the boy sitting on the sharp edge of the fence-rail can't stay there forever."

"That's so," said Mr. Pike meditatively, "but nobody ever knows which way he's going to jump, until he jumps."

"But the boy sooner or later has to decide, and, if he has a friend standing by and looking on, he might shout to him: 'Look out, I'm coming this way!' or 'Look out, I'm going to jump that way!'"

"It isn't the nature of a boy to do that," said Mr. Pike, still meditatively polishing his whiskers. "He lets the jump speak for itself. Besides, it would spoil half the fun if he told the other boy beforehand what he was going to do."

Guthrie gave up the attempt. He had not had much hope that Mr. Pike would declare himself, but he wished to make the trial.

Jimmy Warfield informed him an hour later that General Pelham and Mrs. Pelham had arrived, and were in a suite of rooms at the hotel, but were to dine with the Governor in the evening.

"Of course, you know why they have come," said Warfield.

"Yes," replied Guthrie, "they demand that their daughter's affianced shall be above suspicion even."

Guthrie knew General Pelham, and, at the first opportunity, he called on him and his wife in their rooms.

The General had a great name in the State because of his wealth, his ancestors, his presence, and powerful family connection, and the legends of his military service. He had fought in the Mexican War when but a boy, and had served on the Southern side in the Civil War, where his title of general came to him. Though more than seventy, he was yet vigorous and extremely ruddy. He had long, snow-white hair, fierce white imperial and moustaches, and as he always wore black clothing and, when out of doors, a huge, black slouch hat, his was a figure that could not fail to attract attention. His conversation was usually military and reminiscent. Mrs Pelham was a pale little woman who never said much.

"Ah, Mr. Guthrie," said the General in a rumbling voice that had in it some of the quality of a roar, "Glad to see you! One always finds men of your calling in the midst of the battle."

"That's what we are for, General," said Guthrie.

"Just like a soldier," rumbled the General. "Man I knew said at Gettysburg, when they were falling all around us, 'What fools we are to come here and get ourselves killed!' 'Not so,' I replied, 'it's duty; if duty says run your head against a cannon-ball, run it.' He did it two minutes later. Now, sit down, Mr. Guthrie, and tell us all the news of the capital. The usual trifling lot of boys here, I suppose."

The General was a prodigious politician, but he merely skirted the edge of politics, delivering now and then sweeping condemnations, carelessly waving away a man or a policy as one would brush off a fly. Also, in his talk, he confined himself to general principles, and usually he defined them "as laid down by Jefferson."

Jefferson was always his court of final resort, and, in a State where the memory of Thomas Jefferson was held in great reverence, the General infallibly crushed his opponent by a quotation from his writings.

"Idling away its time! idling away its time, of course, just as all the Legislatures nowadays do!" continued the General. "A military man would make short work of such business! Not half of these members are fit for the rank of corporal!"

"They are doing the best they can," said Guthrie mildly.

"Just what they said of the piano-player when they asked the audience not to shoot him," rumbled the General. "Now, what's all this I hear about the Speaker, Mr. Carton? Half a dozen men have been pouring tales into my ear about him since I've come, but I know that you'll tell me the facts, Mr. Guthrie."

Guthrie saw the pale face of Mrs. Pelham flush a little, and her eyes show keen interest. He wondered if this subdued little woman agreed with her husband in all things.

Guthrie was fully aware that the General knew as much as the public knew about the Carton case, and that what he wanted was an opinion. The General would seek to give the impression that the affair was of no personal interest to him, Carton being merely one of "those trifling boys."

So Guthrie stated quietly his view of the case, letting his confidence in Carton be known, although he took care not to proclaim it too loudly. The General listened, giving utterance to muffled "Hums!" and "Ahs!" but Guthrie glanced once at his pale little wife, and saw a look of gratitude on her face.

Guthrie wondered that the General should speak to him so frankly of Carton in this connection, which was more or less of a family affair; but he surmised it to be a part of the old soldier's policy to refer to the Speaker as a stranger and to give the public that impression.

The General ran his hand through his shock of white hair and referred to the great men with whom he had been associated intimately, General Scott, and General Taylor, and General Lee, and others who had names in the country's history. He was really an impressive-looking man, and, when he circled sagely about public questions, there were many who would nudge each other and whisper: "See, the General knows! The old warrior cuts like a sword right to the heart of affairs."

"I can't say that I ever liked Carton," continued the General. "I've met the youngster once or twice, casually, quite casually. There's a lack of good blood there. I understand that his parents were quite common people, almost 'poor white trash.'"

"But what of that, General?" suddenly said the pale little wife. "The founder of the Pelham family fortunes, the man of great mind and energy, was only an English peasant—he came over in 1634 as you have often told me."

"Madame! Madame!" rumbled the General, "you show an utter lack of discrimination. William George Pelham, our first ancestor, was not a peasant but an English yeoman. A yeoman, madame, was of quite another type."

A faint smile passed over the face of Mrs. Pelham, but she said nothing more, and the General resumed

the discussion of politics at the capital. The majority of the leaders seemed to him to be too young: boys under thirty should not have places of so much responsibility in the State; all the generals in the Mexican War were much older men—men formed in the school of experience, and hence that struggle was an unbroken chain of triumphs.

Guthrie made no protest against the General's sweeping assertions, but he knew that a great change was coming over the State nevertheless—a change made necessary by the law of time rather than by any sweeping revolution. It was now a generation since the Civil War, and the atmosphere of that vast conflict which so long enveloped everything was being driven away by the fresher breezes of a new century, now almost at hand. Its great figures were passing, and men born after the firing on Fort Sumter, men to whom those issues were a part of the dead and historic past, were taking the future of the State into their hands, and the old generation resented it.

So Guthrie listened without feeling to the General's diatribes, although he was a firm believer in the new school. He saw much that was hollow and unconsciously selfish in the old school with its sounding phrases, its great show of manners, and its narrow sectional views; but it was the school of this generation's fathers, and it should be permitted to pass with dignity, and through ripeness of time, off the stage of affairs.

"Come to see us often, Mr. Guthrie," said General Pelham, as Guthrie left. "You will always be welcome."

Guthrie had no doubt either of the General's sincer-

ity or of his liking for himself, yet he was well aware that General Pelham also would want to keep in touch with one who was likely to know all the news of the capital. But no such consideration seemed to enter into the invitation of Mrs. Pelham when she seconded that of her husband.

When Guthrie returned to the lobby of the hotel, he saw Caius Marcellus Harlow sitting quietly in a corner, and apparently gazing in an absent way through a window at the wintry landscape. It was Mr. Harlow's first appearance in the capital since the correspondent had found him in the railroad station on his way to the metropolis of the State.

Guthrie, moved by a sudden impulse, approached Mr. Harlow and greeted him.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Guthrie," said Mr. Harlow quietly. "Sorry I couldn't talk to you more fully last time I saw you, but I was in a hurry then, and trains won't wait, you know."

A thin, dry smile passed over the smooth, shaven face of Caius Marcellus Harlow.

"It was a pity that our conversation was interrupted," said Guthrie quietly, "but the misfortune is not incurable. We can resume it just where we left off, Mr. Harlow."

Again Mr. Harlow smiled dryly. He had been used, in the course of many years, to the evasion of questions, and he was not at all embarrassed now.

"If I remember rightly," he said, "our conversation had passed to the further edge of the realm of fact, and was just about to enter the domain of surmise. So, on the whole, it was well that the train came when it did."

"But we can turn back into the realm of fact," said Guthrie. "For instance, it would interest the public greatly to know just who is back of the 'United.' I confess that I feel much curiosity on the subject myself."

"Naturally. Though a mere on-looker, I, too, feel much interest in the question."

"It is said that you are the agent—that is, the lobbyist of these unknown people," said Guthrie boldly.

"People will say anything," replied Mr. Harlow, smiling his thin, dry smile, "and you, as an experienced correspondent, Mr. Guthrie, knowing how to sift the wheat from the chaff, are aware that the amount of wheat is extremely small and the amount of chaff ridiculously large."

Guthrie looked straight into the eyes of Mr. Harlow, but the calm, smoothly shaven man met his gaze without evasion. Guthrie felt that he might be mistaken; Mr. Harlow looked so candid and innocent, and there was nothing to connect him with the affair save the fact that he seemed to have no business at the capital, but kept a vigilant watch over all legislation.

"So you won't tell me anything about these people?" said Guthrie, smiling.

Mr. Harlow smiled in return.

"I should like to give you an interesting story for the *Times*, Mr. Guthrie," he said, "for—pardon me when I say it—the paper has seemed a little dull to me recently; but I do not know any. Will you accept the will instead of the deed?"

"For the present, because I have to," replied Guthrie; "but, maybe, I shall come to you some other day for information, Mr. Harlow."

Guthrie made a mental note as he went away, and it read, "A second failure," the first being his fruitless interview with Mr. Pike. It annoyed him that he could not grasp the "United" in any way. It was intangible, but nevertheless it was a most vital presence. The incorporators were well-known, yet they were not men of means and power, and, beyond a doubt, they were mere dummies. But Guthrie was not able to get behind these dummies.

He had every inducement to penetrate the secret of the "United:" his sympathy for his friend, Carton, pushed him on, and such a discovery, too, would be important and legitimate news. He resolved to find the truth in this matter, even if it lay at the bottom of a very deep well. But, as the day passed, he made no progress. He confided to Jimmy Warfield his belief that Harlow was the leader, at the capital, of the forces against Carton, and Warfield agreed with him, but he could get no hold. "When I grasp at anything," said Warfield, "it melts in my hand like smoke."

Meanwhile, the forces, in Warfield's expressive phrase, were "lining up for the great struggle." All the ordinary business was forgotten or hurried over at this critical juncture. The inborn love of a fight came to the front, and Mr. Pursley, persistent, belligerent, and wholly impervious to criticism, made the first move in the campaign, filing in the House, as the law prescribed, a petition for the impeachment of its Speaker, Philip Carton. This petition was verified by the affidavit of Mr. Pursley, and in it he set forth duly that the said Philip Carton had abused his power as Speaker to impede and defeat a bill, incorporating the United Electric, Gas, Power, Light, and Heating Company,

a company intended to break the power of various monopolies in the metropolis of the State, and manifestly in the interest of the public. He directly charged that the said Philip Carton was interested in the defeat of this bill; that is, that he was bribed by the old companies to defeat it by the dilatory tactics which a skilful Speaker could adopt.

It was a scene of the deepest solemnity in the House when the petition was presented. All felt the gravity of the occasion and how it was likely to rend the State into factions. Carton himself was in the chair, nearly all the Senators had come in and were on the floor of the House with the Representatives, and the lobbies were crowded. Clarice Ransome, Mary Pelham, and her parents, the Governor's wife, and Mrs. Dennison, all with eager, intent faces, were there.

It was one of the darkest days of winter. Since morning, the clouds had been rolling up from the southwest, and a raw, bitter wind whistled around the old Capitol. Just as the House met, the snow began to fall slowly and sullenly.

There was a dead silence in the chamber save for an occasional scrape of a foot, because all knew what was coming. Mr. Pursley had stated openly when he would present his petition, and there was no attempt to prevent him, as opposition now would have prejudiced the public against Carton.

Mr. Pursley arose, presented his petition in due form, and it was read by the clerk of the House. Carton never stirred during the reading; he was erect and dignified, but pale. When the reading was finished, he stood up and said:

"Gentlemen of the House, as I, your Speaker, am

the person accused in this petition, it is obviously unfit that I should preside over your further proceedings in regard to it. Therefore, I name the gentleman from Barlow County in my place, and I will retire to the floor of the House."

A slight hum of approval arose. It was confidently expected by his enemies and many of his friends, too, that Carton would name one of his supporters to act in his place because the rulings of the Chair might be of the utmost importance. But Roger Elton, the member from Barlow County, a middle-aged, reserved, self-contained man, was more nearly independent than any other member of the House. Broadly speaking a Democrat, he voted now and then with the Republicans, and he was absolutely a man of his own opinions, who was now serving his sixth consecutive term in the House. Beyond a doubt, he would decide all questions strictly upon their merits, and it was seen by this choice that Carton would take no advantage. The first impression that he made was distinctly favourable.

Carton descended from the dais upon which sits the Speaker's chair, but his air was not that of a man who is going down. All his pride and haughtiness were with him at this moment, and every line of his figure said, "I shall return to this seat which is mine." Even old General Pelham, sitting in the lobby between his wife and daughter, was impressed and said, "By George, the fellow carries it well!" But Mary Pelham merely gazed straight before her, and, when Carton glanced once toward the lobby, he did not meet her eyes which looked over and beyond him. Guthrie at this moment wrote in the despatch that he was going

to send, "The bearing of the Speaker as he descended from the chair aroused the admiration of all the House and all the spectators; it was that of a man proud of his innocence and confident of vindication."

Carton walked down the aisle, and took the seat left vacant by the member from Barlow County, from which he faced the new and temporary Speaker, and awaited the next business of the House.

Mr. Elton briefly stated that the House must decide by a majority vote whether an impeachment of its Speaker, Philip Carton, should be ordered. If it should be so decided, he would then appoint a committee to prosecute the same, and the chairman of that committee five days thereafter would lay the case before the Senate, which would try the case. Did the House wish to vote now on the question of impeachment?

Jimmy Warfield sprang up, and was recognised by the Chair.

"Mr. Speaker," he said, "this is a most extraordinary and sensational action, unparalleled in the history of the State. It is a case that demands the utmost attention and thought of the Legislature. I am sure that neither those who are for Mr. Carton nor those who are against him wish hasty action. I move, therefore, that the vote on the question of impeachment be set for 2 P. M. next Monday."

There was no opposition by either side to the motion which was seconded and promptly carried, and the House adjourned for the noon recess. Then arose a great buzz of talk, and the spectators from the lobbies poured in upon the floor. Many friends of Carton wished to show their sympathy; and among them were members ready to defy the public which hated corpo-

rations and trusts, and which was now identifying Carton with them. Clarice Ransome impulsively gave him both her hands and exclaimed,

"Oh, Mr. Carton, I want to tell you how much I admire your counsel!"

Guthrie, standing quietly in the background, was grateful to Clarice for this warm-hearted act, but Carton glanced again toward the lobby. Mary Pelham had not come upon the floor of the House, and her father, now with her arm in his as if he were afraid she would escape, was taking her from the building, while Mrs. Pelham meekly followed. Carton was pale already, but he turned a little paler, and Guthrie knew how this act like a desertion struck him to the heart; a word of sympathy then from Mary Pelham would have gone far.

By some unconscious process, an informal division of the House seemed to take place then. Those who favoured Carton flocked around him, and those who were against him crowded out at the far aisle. Guthrie, always observant, noticed how much larger the hostile crowd was than the other, but he was not surprised. He had never doubted that the impeachment would be laid by the House, and the great fight would come before the Senate as a trial court.

He waited until most of the crowd were gone, then walked slowly out, but in the lobby he found the young Governor and his wife waiting.

"You must come to luncheon with us, Mr. Guthrie," said Lucy Hastings. "Clarice and Mary will be there, of course, and the General and Mrs. Pelham, and—and——"

"And we invited Carton, too," said the Governor,

taking up the continuance for her, "but he would not come."

Guthrie appreciated the Governor's generosity in supporting his friend, but, at this moment, Carton's declination was wise; it would have seemed like a defiance of public opinion.

He walked through the Capitol grounds with the Governor and his wife, the other guests having gone on ahead. The day was still dark and lowering, and the flakes of snow were driven in their faces by the bitter wind.

"What an unpleasant day!" said the Governor, shivering. "I hope it is not an omen for Carton."

"It's just the other way," said Guthrie, cheerfully, as he looked up at the leaden sky. "Bad beginning, good ending."

Guthrie, partly through instinct and partly through the stimulus of occupation, had trained his faculties of observation to the highest pitch, and he noticed at once that the Governor chose the longest way to his house; he inferred from this that Mr. Hastings wished to ask him questions, and in half a minute he was proved to be right.

"Billy," said the Governor, going at once to the point, "have you found out what the Republicans are going to do in this affair of Carton's?"

"No, I have not," replied Guthrie, "but I would give much to know. I tried to interview Mr. Pike who, is as nearly their leader as they come to having any, but he would not answer a question. He dealt wholly in parables and allegories."

"Just like one of those mountaineers," said the Governor. "It would be wrong if the Republicans

tried to 'play politics' in this, but the temptation must be strong."

"No doubt of it," replied Guthrie, "and, if they see a chance to split our party and throw the State into their own hands, it is human nature to do it."

But Lucy Hastings would not tolerate any such idea; she took only the single-minded view that every man should vote according to his belief in the innocence or guilt of Carton—how it could be anything but innocence, she failed to see.

Guthrie and the Governor did not reply, and in a few moments they were at the executive mansion. It was a quiet luncheon save for the voice of General Pelham. All the others were oppressed by the case against Carton, presented in due form at last, and General Pelham may have been troubled by it too; but he assumed, even to a greater extent than usual, the air of an elderly man of the world who could recount much strenuous experience. His reminiscences of old battlefields and of men who were men flowed in a turgid stream, and the others offered few interruptions because they felt little like conversation. Now and then, Mary Pelham, coming out of her cold reserve, pretended gayety, but it was strained and unnatural.

Obviously, there was a cloud over the luncheon, and Guthrie was not sorry when he left the house, because he, too, felt some constraint—and, when there was constraint, he preferred to be with others rather than with his friends.

He went from the Governor's house to the telegraph office, wishing to file a portion of his despatch for early sending, and he wrote it at a desk in the corner of the room. The only operator present was the second as-

sistant, a garrulous boy of eighteen, who remarked when Guthrie finished his work:

"Mighty busy day for us, Mr. Guthrie! I tell you a thing like the impeachment of Mr. Carton gives us lots of work to do. The wires will be burnin' all day and to-night, too. The boss and Tom didn't get away to dinner until five minutes ago. We've been sendin' columns an' columns to the evenin' papers, and lots of private despatches, too."

"Ah!" said Guthrie absently.

"Yes," continued the boy, "I've been on most of the private ones myself. Sent a long one for Mr. Harlow all the way to New York City just a few minutes before you came in."

All Guthrie's abstraction was gone, and, in an instant, he was keenly alive. A long despatch by Caius Marcellus Harlow to New York City, and that, too, right on the heels of the petition against Carton! He looked again at the boy, who was none too clear-witted and obviously anxious to talk about the big day's work.

A great temptation assailed Guthrie at that moment. He had an instinctive feeling that the telegram of Mr. Harlow's was sent to the people who were making the fight on Carton, and there was the boy before him—foolish, plastic, ready to be moulded in his hands as he wished. Guthrie had no doubt that, by adroit questionings, he could draw from him every fact of the despatch, and the boy himself remain ignorant that he had told.

It was like a wireless telegram out of the dark, telling where the key to the mystery lay, and Guthrie glanced around the room and then out of the door and into the

street; no one was coming, they would be alone there for a while longer.

He thought of all that depended on the solution of this problem—the future of Carton, his personal happiness, the salvation of the State from a great disgrace, and the prevention of a terrible split in the party. He must play the spy, the thief—if one need call it so—and stop these things! After all, the cause of justice would be served.

Guthrie opened his lips to ask the boy a question, but he stopped and shivered. He felt even a physical revolt at this thing, the like of which he had never done before. The words halted at his lips, and, hastily putting on his overcoat, he almost ran out of the room.

He inhaled a deep gulp of the cold, fresh air, and felt better. The day was still dark and lowering, but a hope came to him. Harlow was in communication with people in New York City, and they were the men who were making the fight on Carton. That had been told to him without his seeking; and he had a clue. Something had been gained, and the “something” was not so little.

He walked toward the hotel, and saw Jimmy Warfield, wrapped in a great overcoat, standing on the steps.

“There’s a sensation,” said Warfield. “Senator Pike got a telegram half an hour ago. It came from Sayville; that’s the nearest place on the railroad to his home—it’s fifty miles from there across the mountains. The Pikes and the Dilgers have broken out again—it seems they’ve had an old feud which has been resting for the last two years. Pike’s younger brother, Nathan, has been murdered from ambush,

and the Pikes have telegraphed for the Senator to come. He's the head of the family, and he'll have to go."

Guthrie was startled. This was like a projection from an old and bloody past. He was familiar with the story of mountain feuds, but rarely did they involve a State senator.

"Where is Mr. Pike?" he asked.

"In his room, packing up. He never hesitated a minute; it seems that he had been expecting an outbreak. But I don't think he'll talk."

"It isn't that," said Guthrie. "I'm going to the mountains with him."

He had taken his resolution in an instant. Such an event as this, coming at so critical a juncture and involving the leader of the Republican minority in the Legislature, was an event of great importance, hardly inferior in interest to the fight on Carton. Moreover, the main contest over Carton could not come up for at least ten days yet, and by that time he would be back in the capital.

"Yes," he repeated, "I'm going with Mr. Pike. You can't tell what will happen in those mountains."

"All right, Billy; but whatever you do," said Warfield, earnestly, "don't meddle with the feud; you know that so long as you are an outsider you are as safe in the mountains as you are anywhere in the world."

"I'll bear it in mind," Guthrie replied over his shoulder, as he was already hastening back to the telegraph office.

CHAPTER IX

INTO THE WILDERNESS

GUTHRIE sent a brief despatch to the office stating the case, its importance, his ability to cover it and to return in time for the Carton trial. He added that the east-bound train which would pass through Sayville was due in the Capital in three hours, and unless he received instructions to the contrary, he would go on it with Mr. Pike, expecting another man to be sent to the Capital to take his place temporarily.

He saw the despatch sent, and went to Mr. Pike's boarding-house. He walked up to the Senator's door and knocked, unannounced. In reply to the brief "come in," he pushed open the door, and entered.

Mr. Pike was on his knees on the floor, putting some things into an old shiny black valise, and the last article that went in just as Guthrie approached had a metallic blue look. Guthrie knew from the single glimpse that it was a self-acting, seven-shot, 38-calibre revolver.

Mr. Pike looked up.

"Ah! it is you, Mr. Guthrie?" he said.

Guthrie did not reply, startled by the change in the Senator's appearance. Mr. Pike's face, always thin, looked thinner than ever; a dark blue tint had overspread it, and the bloodless lips, slightly parted, disclosed the two rows of sharp, white teeth. The cheek-

bones were high and prominent, and the skin lay upon them like parchment.

Mr. Pike's whole character seemed to have changed with his appearance. There was something ferocious, something savage in the look of his black eyes and the angles of his lean face. It was the gaze of a North American Indian, or rather of a man from whom a hard-won civilisation had suddenly slipped.

Guthrie hesitated. He scarcely knew how to approach this new man, this stranger.

"Mr. Pike," he said, "I have heard of your misfortune."

"Mr. Guthrie," said Mr. Pike quietly, "Nathan was my brother, and it was right that they should send for me. I know my duty here—I am a senator of this State, and there is a great trial coming—but out there in the mountains, where my home is, blood is calling—the blood of my murdered brother. Mr. Guthrie, with us of the mountains the family always comes before the State."

Guthrie knew this, he knew the strength of kinship in the mountains, and he knew Mr. Pike must be suffering.

"I am going with you," he said.

"That can't be," said the Senator. "This concerns only the Pikes and the Dilgers."

"I think not," replied Guthrie firmly. "At any rate, I am going. The same train that takes you to Sayville will take me too."

Mr. Pike fastened the catch of his valise before he replied, and, when he looked up again, his face was stern and fixed.

"You had better stay here, Mr. Guthrie," he said,

"and I tell you because I like you. But, if you insist on going, I can't prevent it."

"That's quite true," replied Guthrie with a slight laugh. "You, for one reason, think that it is your duty to go, and I, for another reason, think that it is mine to go, too."

"Very well," replied the Senator, "yet I wish you wouldn't do it. And, when you get in the mountains, you'd better keep away from me. It's all between the Pikes and the Dilgers, and there's no need of anybody else's being drawn into it."

He spoke quite simply. At no time had he raised his voice above its customary pitch, but Guthrie soon saw that his attention was wandering; he was thinking now of the wintry hills, the dwarfed undergrowth, hidden marksmen, and his dead brother. Guthrie was much moved.

"Mr. Pike," he suddenly exclaimed, "I wish to offer you my deepest sympathy."

He held out his hand, and Mr. Pike clasped it in a firm grasp. Nothing more was said, and Guthrie left the house at once. He, too, had packing to do, and he intended to make a call after that. In the street, a messenger boy handed him a telegram containing the single word, "Go." Guthrie had known that it would be so, and, thrusting the message in his pocket, continued on his way to his own room where he finished his task in half an hour.

He understood that it was no light journey on which he was going. The mountains are sufficiently arduous in summer, but are trebly so in winter, and Guthrie provided himself with top-boots and a flask of strong whiskey, something that he never drank at the capital.

Equipped now for a campaign, he went to the Governor's house and sent his card to Clarice Ransome. Then he waited in the parlour before the blazing wood fire, and began to feel the thrill of coming action. On the whole, he was not sorry that he was starting on this journey. Here was something tangible. He knew just how to proceed. The field of the campaign lay clear before him. He was not groping in the dark, as in the Carton case.

He heard a step, and he rose as Clarice Ransome entered. There was a faint flush on her face as of surprise that he should come back so soon, but no trace of displeasure.

Guthrie hesitated, and was embarrassed. He had come on an impulse to tell her that he was going into the mountains, but really there was no reason why he should tell her this; it occurred to him now that it was of no interest or importance to her. He flushed, and she, seeing his embarrassment, shared it—but for a moment only—then, recovering herself, she was cool and seemingly indifferent.

"I came to tell you good-bye," said Guthrie, somewhat lamely.

"Good-bye? You are going to leave the capital?"

"Yes, I am going into the mountains," said Guthrie, "but I expect to be back in eight or ten days. Still it's quite a journey—particularly at this time of the year, and I've got a mission that must seem to you remarkable. Suppose, we sit down here before the fire, and I'll tell you about it."

She complied with his request, and she felt a little pleasurable thrill that he had come to tell her of his departure. Had she been analysing

herself, she would have said that it made a slight appeal to her vanity.

Guthrie told her of the despatch to Mr. Pike, the state of affairs between the Pikes and the Dilgers, and his interview with the Senator. He offered no apology for the mountaineers, leaving her to infer what she chose. But she made no comment upon them; instead, she spoke of him.

“And are you really going into those wild mountains?” she asked, “and in the depth of winter! Why it is like a campaign! See it is snowing now!”

Guthrie glanced at the window. The flakes had increased in size and number, and were driving against the glass. He looked at the blazing logs, and the fine face of Clarice Ransome, rosy in the twilight; the mountains were not so inviting after all.

“In some respects, I envy you,” she said. “The lives of women are monotonous; those of men are not, or need not be so. You are going upon what is an adventure, full of excitement and the unexpected.”

“I did not know that a woman would take that view of it,” said Guthrie.

“Perhaps I should not have done so a month ago,” she replied, thoughtfully, “but I can do so now. I suppose action is the best thing in life.”

“I have no doubt of it,” said Guthrie with confidence.

She was silent, gazing meditatively into the fire. She was thinking then of Raoul from whom she had received a letter that morning, a letter full of the most beautiful phrases. Her heart had warmed to him as she read it. Raoul could be so expressive! But the

picture of him with his beautiful neckties, his unimpeachable coats, his delicate features, and the faint, almost imperceptible odour of perfume about him rose up before her. She could not conceive of Raoul plunging into a wilderness of mountains among men half or wholly wild, who were engaging with zest in the business of shooting at each other: his aptitudes lay in other directions.

"I must go," said Guthrie, "I have been taking up your time, but I wished to say good-bye."

"Good-bye," she said, and she put a cool hand in his. "But remember that I demand the tale of your adventures when you come back."

"You shall have it," said Guthrie as he went out.

The winter twilight fell early, and with it came the east-bound train which found Guthrie, wrapped in a big black overcoat, a small valise in his hand, waiting at the station. Mr. Pike, also valise in hand, was waiting there, too, sombre and quiet. Guthrie nodded to him, but did not speak, judging that the Senator wished to be alone with his sorrow and his plans for the future.

It was to be a hard night's journey. Express trains as good as any in the world passed through the capital on their way to New York, but they did not stop at Sayville, and Guthrie and the Senator were forced to take what is known as a "local," one that stopped at every station and made slow time. It would put them into Sayville early the next morning, but it had no sleeping-coaches, and Guthrie, with the skill of an old campaigner, made himself as comfortable as possible in one of the red plush seats with his valise for a pillow and his overcoat for a blanket. Mr Pike sat at the

other end of the coach staring solemnly out at the hills that slid by.

They had less than a dozen persons for company, and none of them made any impression on Guthrie. He wished to go to sleep at once, but his eyes refused to close. He, too, began to stare out of the window like Mr. Pike, although he saw the hills that fled past, while Mr. Pike did not. The snow ceased falling, the moon came out, silvery and clear, and it was a comfortable landscape, despite the wintry night, intersected with stone fences, dotted here and there with big, red brick houses, and bearing all the signs of opulence and an old civilisation. It was hard to realise that another hundred and fifty miles would take him into a region so wild that the old clan feuds of the Celt yet endured, and the law of the rifle was still the chief law of the land. But Guthrie knew well that he would wake up the next morning in a world wholly different from his, and, although he had seen it often, the contrast always struck him with great force.

Passengers got off at the little stations, and new ones got on, but the number aboard the train did not change materially, nor did their character or lack of it. There was not one among them whose features Guthrie could remember ten minutes later; all paled before the swart, set face of Mr. Pike still staring steadily out of the window at the hills flying past and never seeing them.

Guthrie was glad to notice that the snow had stopped; fifty miles east of the capital, none at all seemed to have fallen, and the red brick houses looked snug and warm in the moonlight. At last he began to feel sleepy; the dim train-lights flickered overhead, the figures of the

passengers wavered, and only the stern face of Mr. Pike at the window remained fixed and vivid. Then he fell asleep, and was unconscious of everything till the conductor awoke him on a raw, cold morning, with a misty dawn creeping in at the car windows.

"Sayville!" cried the conductor. "All off for Sayville!"

Guthrie shivered, drew on his gloves, and pulled the high collar of his overcoat about his ears. Mr. Pike, valise in hand and watchful, was already at the door. Guthrie was sure that the Senator had not closed his eyes throughout the night, and, taking his own valise, he followed.

He stepped out on the little platform, and the train with a shriek and a whiz left him, sending back a farewell and derisive column of smoke. Guthrie looked about him. The expected change from the night before had come in all its completeness, and the contrast, as always, struck sharply upon his mind.

He was deep in the mountains, and they lay in a coil about him, ridge on ridge, until they died away in a faint blur on the horizon. The dwarfed forests that clothed them from base to summit were swept bare of leaves by the winter winds, and the naked branches hung mournfully. Sayville, a mean little village of squalid houses, sprawled in a cleft between the hills, and Guthrie, looking at it, wondered why anybody should ever want to live there. The sun was not yet risen, and the gray dawn, its vanguard, was still misty. The village was asleep, but, even in its rest, it conveyed to Guthrie no idea of comfort, like the snug towns of the lowlands that he had left behind.

Mr. Pike tapped him on the shoulder. A long, thin

mountaineer of uncertain age, leading a spare horse, had met the Senator at the station.

"Mr. Guthrie," said Mr. Pike, "I take horse now for Briarton, and I ride fast. It wouldn't do at all for you to go with me from here, and I tell you that, if you go to that two-story house over there, you can get breakfast and a fire."

Guthrie nodded cheerfully.

"I understand, Mr. Pike," he said. "I don't want to go with you now, but I'll follow. I'll be in Briarton not many hours behind you. Good-bye, Mr. Pike; I hope no harm will come to you."

He held out his hand, and it was enclosed in a warm and hearty clasp. Then the Senator sprang into the saddle, and, with the messenger by his side, rode away on the slope of the mountain. Guthrie watched them until they were lost in the bleak forest, and then he went to the house that Mr. Pike had pointed out to him.

He ate a poor breakfast in a cold room, and felt that he was beginning the day badly. The inside of the house was more cheerless than the outside; everything was slatternly, and the people were lank and pasty-faced. It gave Guthrie a sense of keen discomfort, and he began to appreciate all the risks and troubles of his venture.

He was more than an hour in securing a horse and a guide, the horse to be used all the way, while the guide was to stop at Lone Oak, another tiny village on the way, thirty miles deeper into the mountains; he would have to go the remaining twenty miles alone, and take his chances. He tied his little valise on the saddle behind him, and, with the twenty-year old boy, his guide, he set forth. The boy, as he soon disclosed of

his own accord, bore the name of Ezra Perkins, and he was very curious about the world in which his own orbit was so limited.

"What be you goin' to Briarton fur?" he asked with the frank curiosity of the mountains.

"Business," replied Guthrie vaguely.

"What's your line? Groceries? No! Wa'll, I reckon then it's shoes, but I 'low it's a pow'ful bad time to be goin' to Briarton. They're all took up there with the feud that's broke out fresh between the Pikes and the Dilgers. That was Senator Pike hisself that got off the train when you did—the tall man with the black hair—smartest man in the mountings they say—he's mighty nigh the head of the hull kit an' b'ilin' of the Pikes, but the Dilgers hev laid his brother out cold for shore!"

The road began to ascend the slope of the mountains, and led away over the ridges.

The earth here was free from snow, and the cold crisp air sparkled with freshness. Guthrie's spirits returned. This was a lonely world, but it was worth while to see it at times, in the brown grandeur of winter, ridge on ridge, and peak on peak. The sun shot up, and poured down a flood of gold on the wilderness, in which Guthrie with a sweep of miles now saw not a single house, not a single cabin-smoke. But he enjoyed the absence of human beings after the fret and struggle of the capital, and, lifting up his voice, he sang, then listened to the echo in the hollows of the hills.

"I took over to Lone Oak oncet a drummer who sing like that," said Ezra. "I thought somethin' was wrong with him, and shore nuff there was. He's in the 'sylum now—disapp'inted in love."

Guthrie laughed. He knew how to take this, which was not meant as a satire, but merely as a plain statement of facts, irrespective of consequences or deductions.

"I'm not like the drummer," he said, "I'm not disappointed in love."

"You're lucky," said Ezra. "I am, an' it's a thing you don't want to happen to you more'n oncet in a lifetime. It was Sukey Parker, t'other side of the mounting. We got religion at the same meetin' an' kep' comp'ny a hull year. I thought it was all right, but she sacked me an' took Bill Hubbard. I felt pow'ful bad over it fur a while. You see, I'm a-gittin' old, an' it's time I wuz married an' settled down."

"How old are you?" asked Guthrie.

"Twenty-one, come next June," replied Ezra sadly, "an' I don't want to be no old bachelor, with all of 'em hevin' the laugh on me!"

Guthrie made no comment, knowing that, by mountain standards of development, Ezra should have been comfortably married a couple of years ago. Instead, he let the boy chatter on, but now he paid little attention, his mind becoming absorbed with the mountains about him over which he rode. Although it was a colder and higher region, there was no sign of snow here. The sunlight streamed over everything, gilding the bare rock and the brown bushes and filling the lungs with tonic.

Guthrie, looking upon the sea of crests and ridges, could understand how the main currents of civilisation had passed them by, one turning to the North and the other to the South, reuniting in a grand westward sweep after they had flanked the mountain chain.

Silence and desolation reigned everywhere. There was no sound save the faint murmur of the wind about the slopes and through the bare branches. They did not meet a human being, and they were two hours out of Sayville when Guthrie saw the smoke of the first cabin. It was a thin stream rising from a glen half a mile to the right, and he felt that it was a blur on the landscape. Ezra volunteered information as to who lived there, but the name made no impression on Guthrie. They were now in a narrow road leading along the side of a ridge, and Ezra rode before, the way not being wide enough for two.

They came presently to the crest of the ridge, and Guthrie saw far ahead a narrow valley.

"That," said Ezra, pointing with a long forefinger, "is Lone Oak, but it's a good fifteen miles from here. I reckon, stranger, that you'll have to stay all night there."

"I don't think so," said Guthrie. "I suppose I can get another guide in that town, and, if I don't, I can push on alone."

Ezra looked questioningly at Guthrie.

"'Pears to me," he said, "that you're pow'ful anxious to git to Briarton; never knowed a drummer to be in sich a hurry afore. An' that ain't sich a mighty big grip to tote samples in neither!"

He looked at the little valise that his employer carried on his saddle, and Guthrie knew that he was eaten up with curiosity concerning its contents, but he would not gratify it. He was willing to let Ezra, if he chose, suppose that it was filled with improved revolvers, for sale either to the Pikes or the Dilgers, whichever faction made the better bid,

The promise was still all of fair weather, and the horses, trained to the steep and narrow roads of the mountains, made good speed toward Lone Oak. Guthrie rejoiced in the glorious peace and sunshine, but he could not forget that to which he was riding. He had an inborn love of order, and he respected the law; he did not believe that there could be any complete civilisation without it; lynching shocked him as something debasing to those who took part in it, and the inevitable road to things yet worse; and much as he loved his State, he always felt a sense of shame when any fresh outbreaks in these mountains occurred; they were as much a part of the State as were the lowlands, and responsibility for them could not be escaped: here was a new cause for disgrace in this sudden outcropping of the war between the Pikes and the Dilgers.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, they reached the narrow valley in which stood the village of Lone Oak, a cluster of about fifteen houses, wrapped in mountain isolation. Ezra expressed his joy vocally. He did not care to go any farther into the mountains; the Pikes were nothing to him, nor were the Dilgers, but Briarton would belong for the time to the one family or the other, whichever was strong enough to hold it, and even a man attending strictly to his own business might get in the way of a stray bullet.

His words made no impression on Guthrie, who was reckoning the time of day, and how long it would take him to reach Briarton after a brief stop in Lone Oak, as he had set his heart upon arriving without delay at the seat of the trouble.

Lone Oak proved to be a lean and unpicturesque village, but Guthrie found in it enough overcooked food

for a dinner, and was able to hire a horse for the second stage of the journey, though he could secure no guide. Senator Pike and his companion had passed on three hours before, riding hard, and there was sure to be trouble when they reached Briarton. Ezra strongly advised Guthrie to stay in Lone Oak until the next morning, as darkness was likely to catch him alone on the mountains, but Guthrie felt no apprehensions, since the trail from Lone Oak led straight out to Briarton and nowhere else.

Ezra bade him a friendly good-bye, and Guthrie rode on, not sorry to be alone, because there were times when his own company was good enough, and the majesty of the mountains appealed to him in solitude.

In the East, long shadows began to appear on the peaks and ridges, and the rocks burned in red gold. Guthrie stopped once, on a crest and looked at the half of the world that was beginning already to feel the touch of the coming twilight. In its loneliness and its solitary grandeur, it had so much solemn majesty that he wondered why the people who lived in such a world did not come under its spell. But his experience in the mountains told him that it made no appeal to them, put no ennobling thoughts in their minds. Hence Guthrie concluded that strength and loftiness of character were not developed by isolation and loneliness, but by the constant struggle with other men. As for himself, he wanted seclusion only at intervals, and the remainder of his time he wished to spend in a crowded and therefore more interesting and stimulating arena; he saw no merit in avoiding the battle of life.

The twilight deepened on the eastern peaks, but the west was yet filled with the fire of the sun; every rock

and bush there stood out in sharp tracery against the blazing heavens. Guthrie saw now that he would not arrive in Briarton until long after dark, but he was yet without fear. His horse, bred in the mountains, was sure of foot, and he knew that he had only to give him rein in the darkness in order to be taken safely to his destination.

Some figures outlined in black against the red sunlight appeared on the slope of a mountain, separated from him only by a deep ravine. They were men with guns on their shoulders, and Guthrie saw that they were typical mountaineers, tall, lean, high of cheek-bone and wary of eye. They were watching him, and, waving his hand to them in friendly fashion, he rode calmly on.

"I wonder which they are," he thought; "the Pikes or the Dilgers?" and he found himself leaning in more friendly fashion toward the Pikes. "This won't do," he said; "I must take no part in it, even if Senator Pike is my friend."

The mountaineers looked at him for a minute, and then, apparently satisfied that he was a harmless stranger, disappeared in the undergrowth. How like, it all was, to the primeval wilderness, thought Guthrie. It was the primeval wilderness—unchanged in four generations, only the red man was gone, and a white man, almost as wild had taken his place! When the mountaineers disappeared, the world blazed again, red and solitary in the light of the setting sun. Once his horse neighed, and the echo ran trembling among the peaks.

The sun fell behind the wall of the mountains, and the night came with a fine shadowy quality, in which the peaks and the ridges rose more grandly than ever and

took Protean shapes. The trail was narrow, but it lay clear before him, and Guthrie rode placidly on.

Late in the night, his horse raised his head and neighed again, and Guthrie looked down into a little valley where he saw dark blurs that he knew to be houses. "Briarton!" he exclaimed in pleasure, because he was growing tired and sleepy, and he had been alone long enough. The thought of food, fire, and a bed appealed to him.

He halted his horse for a few moments, and looked down on the hamlet. Peaceful enough, it seemed now, snuggling between the cliffs, with the moonlight throwing stray beams on the log walls. Then he rode on down the hillside, and a man rising up out of the darkness bore on his bridle rein with a heavy hand.

"Be you a-takin' any part in this, stranger?" asked the phantom figure.

Guthrie knew well what he meant and he replied promptly:

"Pike or Dilger, it's nothing to me!"

"Then what do you want?"

"Food for an empty stomach and a bed for a tired back."

"Ride on, stranger, you'll find both below."

Guthrie resumed his journey. The questions, as he knew, were purely formal—the mountaineer would naturally infer from his dress and manners that he did not belong in the country, and could have no part in the quarrel.

Briarton in the wan moonlight was a beautiful place, its log-houses frosted with silver, the little creek that dashed down from the mountains foaming over the stones, and all the squalor hidden by this kindly veil of the dark.

He beat on the door of the largest log-house in the place, and a woman came at last to his knock. Yes, they took travellers, she said, and she gave his horse to a sleepy boy whom she had roused. Then she raked together the smouldering coals on the hearth, and put on more wood. Evidently, like Ezra, she took Guthrie for a "drummer," although she looked doubtfully at the small size of his valise. Guthrie wondered what "drummers" ever came to this remote mountain hamlet, and what they came for.

He obtained food, poor in itself and badly cooked, but hunger was an ample sauce. As he ate, he managed to draw deftly from his hostess that nothing had happened in Briarton save the arrival of Mr. Pike, which occurred about sundown, and was a great event in the village. Guthrie inferred readily from this that the hamlet was in the hands of the Pikes, and he could not help being glad, because he leaned to the Senator's side despite his resolution.

After his supper, he warmed himself, and went to bed in the single spare room of the house. It was a rude little apartment with a worn rag carpet on the floor, and old pictures from illustrated papers on the roughly plastered walls; but the bed looked soft and warm, and Guthrie was content. Before drawing down the covers, he looked out at the little window, and he realised again that two hundred miles and thirty hours had put him in another world. On the other side of the valley rose the bald side of the mountain, gloomy and grand, and nearer by flowed the creek, its waters hurrying noisily over the stones. To right and left were the scattered log houses, all dark and silent. Everything was primitive and wild.

Far off on the mountain, he suddenly saw a single

light that blazed and went out. Another appeared lower down the slope, but it, too, blazed and went out, and after that the moonlight was unbroken. Some kind of a signal, concluded Guthrie, but he felt only a vague and fleeting interest which did not keep him from going to bed in another minute and sleeping soundly through the remainder of the night.

CHAPTER X

THE TEST OF STEEL

GUTHRIE would have slept late the next morning had it not been for the call of his hostess to breakfast, set for a certain hour, at which time all must come or go without. His first inquiry was for the Senator. What had become of him, and what was he going to do? Mr. Pike was to preach the funeral sermon of his brother, and the woman pointed to the low log church just at the base of the mountain.

Guthrie felt again a deep thrill of sympathy for this man who was trying so hard to lead an enlightened life, but whom association and circumstance tried in so fiery a crucible. "Where does Mr. Pike live?" he asked, and they pointed out to him a large frame house, standing near the creek. It was the only one in the place not of logs, and Guthrie had not observed it the night before. The immediate impression it made was of superiority to its surroundings, just as he knew that its owner had raised himself above the people among whom he was born.

Guthrie, acting upon his impulse of sympathy, approached the house, and noticing that others were entering the door, fell in with the crowd after the mountain custom and passed inside. The people with whom he went included both men and women—all with

the mountain stamp upon their faces, and all solemn and gloomy. Some of the women were crying.

Mr. Pike stood at the door of a large room in the centre of which rested the coffin of his brother. The Senator's face was pale, but his features were firm and composed, and his long, black frock coat was buttoned tightly about his body. He shook hands with the people one by one, and, when he came to Guthrie, he said simply, "I am glad that you are here, Mr. Guthrie, to share our grief."

Guthrie, by the necessity of his career, had become familiar with scenes of sorrow, and he had looked many times upon the victims of violent death; but none stirred him more deeply than this gathering of the rude mountaineers about their dead. Scarcely a word was said. He heard only the moving of feet and the soft crying of the women.

Four men lifted the coffin presently, and bore it from the house toward the church. The Senator followed, bare-headed, and just behind and after him came the people in double file—a procession of mourners. Guthrie fell into line beside a young mountaineer, and hat in hand followed on.

The day was not like its predecessor; the sun no longer gilded the mountains; instead heavy, leaden clouds were trooping up from the southwest. Guthrie felt once the touch of a wet snowflake on his face.

The solemn procession entered the church, and the coffin, the body within, was placed at the foot of the pulpit. The people sat on the rude wooden benches, filling them to the last seat. Then the Senator ascended the pulpit, and preached the funeral sermon of his brother.

Mr. Pike was not a regularly ordained minister, but he possessed the gift of eloquence, and, in the mountains, where religion fills so large a share of discussion, he often preached. The secret of his great power over these people, as Guthrie saw, lay in his superiority of character and culture, his readiness of speech, and his capacity for the happy phrase. He had, in this moment of grief and tension, a rapt and solemn air as of one who is an interpreter between this world and the next.

Mr. Pike spoke of the hereafter as a place of safety and rest—the simile was inevitable in the mountains where vigilance was the best guard against danger—and he described our path in this life as beset with thorns. Short were the days of man and full of sorrow! It was only in the hereafter that joy true and lasting came. Then he spoke simply of his brother, so many years younger than himself—who had always been but a boy to him—and of his sudden end—without a moment's warning!

He made no threats against those who had slain his brother—he never called their names; but through all his sermon ran an indefinable note which seemed to say, "Vengeance is the Lord's—but man may be his instrument," and Guthrie knew that Mr. Pike felt in his heart he was "the man."

The Senator talked on. All hung on his words. These were his people, and he swayed them alike as he inclined to vengeance or to the blessings of the hereafter. Guthrie, too, followed, both his sympathy and his interest keeping him intent upon every sentence that fell from the speaker's lips. Once he glanced through the window, and saw that clouds darker and heavier than ever were filing in solemn procession across the

sky. Now and then a snowflake struck the glass, and the wall of the mountain looked black and threatening.

The quality in the speaker's sermon that seemed to indicate the note of vengeance appeared again, and Guthrie saw its effect on the faces of the audience which grew black and lowering; but in a moment Mr. Pike shifted to the peace of the hereafter, and in another minute or two closed. Then he made a short prayer touching in its simplicity and pathos, and descended from the pulpit.

The solemn procession began its march again, and passed out of the church to the foot of the mountain where the burial took place; after which the crowd dispersed slowly, leaving the Senator and Guthrie together. Guthrie knew that they burned with curiosity about him, and later would ask him questions, especially as they saw that Mr. Pike and he were friends. However, for the present, they let him alone.

The Senator stood a little while beside the freshly-turned earth as if in silent prayer, and then turning away put on his hat, and held out his hand to Guthrie.

"Mr. Guthrie," he said, "I did not want you to come, but since you are here, I am glad of it. Somehow, you seem to me to represent that other world beyond the mountains, and, in your person, it mourns beside my brother's grave. I thank you "

Guthrie gave the Senator's hand a sympathetic clasp, and then the two walked together among the trees. He saw that Mr. Pike must speak to some one, must find somewhere an outlet for his feelings, and he listened in silence and sympathy. A secret of his popularity with men of influence and power was this ability to listen well.

The Senator talked of his brother and himself, of the mountains and the world beyond, and Guthrie listened, absorbed. Both forgot the clouds and the falling snow. The flakes fell faster and larger. Already the new grave behind them was covered, and, had they looked to see, they would have found that the crests of the peaks and the ridges were lost in the mists. The damp winds from the southwest came on a front of snow.

But neither Guthrie nor the Senator yet noticed. The stoicism of the mountaineer in this moment of grief and in the company of the warm, human sympathy that Guthrie gave him was broken at last. He told how he had struggled to stop the feud, how he had tried to rise above the feelings of passion and revenge, and to train his people also to set their minds on higher objects. He was borne up, there in the capital, by the comradeship and friendship of men who had seen more of the world than he, and he had believed that, through his efforts, peace would last in his part of the mountains. Then came messengers telling of threatened trouble, and informing him that the Dilgers would seek to renew the strife. He had not believed, he had looked upon it as a false alarm, and the messages were renewed, more emphatic than ever; then came the news of his brother's death, and he had tried to endure it like a Christian man, preaching Christian resignation to himself.

This and much more he poured forth, often disjointed or half-finished, but as clear as water to Guthrie. He saw the dual nature struggling in the man—the old mountain doctrine, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, the inheritance of birth, and through all the

years of his boyhood deemed a matter of course, and the new principles of peace learned in manhood. He was now face to face with the most powerful test, and Guthrie thrilled once more with sympathy for this man whom he liked so much, and to whom fate had been so unkind.

Their walk led them far into the forest, which extended along the base of the mountains, a wood of tall oak and beech with a dense growth of underbrush. The two men followed a path which seemed to be fairly well-trodden like a mountain trail. Guthrie looked up, and was surprised to find the boughs covered with snow. The skies cleared for the moment, and shone in vivid blue; beneath this, the trees veiled in snow were cones of white. The forest was silent, save for the occasional soft drop of snow or the crackling of a dry branch under its weight. The air once more was pure and fresh.

Guthrie looked back, and the hamlet was lost among the trees. The two, absorbed, the one in talk and the other in listening, had passed deep into the forest. To all intents, it was still the primeval wilderness in its winter robe of white. Save themselves there was no sign of a human being or a human habitation. All around them under the trees stretched the snow, white and untrodden. Seemingly the world was wrapped in a great peace—but it was only for a moment.

The Senator suddenly grasped Guthrie by the arm and exclaimed, "Did you not hear a footstep?" But Guthrie heard nothing; the forest ear was more acute than his. The next instant, the hand of the Senator tightened on his arm, and he was dragged

down in the snow. Then he heard a sharp report that sounded to him like the cracking of a great whip, and a buzz as of something passing with lightning speed over their heads. He looked up and saw a brown, evil face, fifty yards away thrust from behind a tree-trunk, and a pair of brown hands lowering a rifle barrel. He heard the Senator exclaim, "Pete Dilger!" and he sprang to his feet. He knew from what he had heard in the village that Pete Dilger was the worst of all the Dilgers.

The Senator was up before him, and Guthrie was stunned by the change in his friend. Every trace of the civilised man had disappeared from his face. He was crouched like an Indian in ambush, and a huge self-acting revolver was held in his right hand. The high and sharp cheek-bones looked higher and sharper than ever, and the cruel black eyes glittered with the passion and joy of revenge. His hat had fallen off, and the long, straight black hair, sweeping back from his brow, continued the likeness of the Indian.

But, even in this tense moment, the man was not forgetful of his friend. Sweeping Guthrie back with his left hand, he cried: "Go back! You have nothing to do with this!" Then he ran into the forest, directly toward the point where the ambushed marksman had lain, and Guthrie caught a glimpse of Dilger seeking a new place of concealment. Then the trees shut both from his view, and he was alone.

Guthrie stood on the spot where the Senator, foreseeing the shot, had pulled him down. The paralysis of the moment passed, and he tried to choose a course. He had no doubt that the Dilgers now identified him

as a Pike follower, because he was in the company of Mr. Pike. The Senator was right when he had told him to stay away.

Guthrie had all an enlightened man's horror of strife and bloodshed, but he thought nothing then of the way that he had suddenly been projected into this mountain feud. All his thoughts were of the Senator. Would there be a duel between him and Dilger, or would Dilger lead him into an ambush? He was tempted for the moment, to follow them by their tracks in the snow, but that would be folly in an unarmed man, and he obeyed his second impulse to hurry to the village and secure help for the Senator. He did not realise in the moment of excitement and suspense that he had become an ally of the Pikes, nor would he have stopped, had he realised it.

He ran a few steps, and then he stopped again. Unarmed though he was, he could not leave the Senator alone in a struggle! even if he procured help in the village, all would be over before he could arrive. He looked about him, and saw again the world in white—the world of mid-winter, deep, still, and cold, but a cold that sent the blood leaping through the veins, cleared the brain, and doubled the strength of every nerve and muscle.

Hills and valleys were covered with snow, soiled by no human foot. There was no sound in the forest save the crack of some bough breaking beneath the load of snow.

Guthrie stood at his full height, and inhaled deep draughts of the cold, pure air, feeling that he was a strong man in a world of strong men and could care for himself. A bough fifty yards away broke with a

crack louder than the rest, and its weight of snow fell with a soft, crushing sound.

He saw a heavy stick lying at his feet, and he stooped to pick it up for lack of a better weapon. Again he did not realise that some of his own civilisation was slipping from him, and he was becoming the hunter—the hunter of men.

As he bent down to pick up the stick, he heard a slight noise, and his eyes wandered around the circle of the horizon until they reached a clump of bushes on his right. There they stopped, and the hand that held the club remained suspended in the air.

The surprise was so sudden, so terrible, that Guthrie felt for an instant as if his veins had become empty of blood and he were a lifeless thing. He took only one brief glance, but he saw distinctly every feature of Dilger—the leathern face, the black, exultant eyes, and above all the rifle held in steady hands. He knew that Dilger took him for an ally of the Pikes. And what else was he now? He was at the mercy of a merciless man.

Guthrie, by a supreme effort, recovered command of himself. One glance at the cruel, taunting face had shown him that the mountaineer, with the instincts of the savage would wish to enjoy his triumph, to play a few moments with his victim before sending the fatal bullet. So he pretended not to see, and sinking to his knees began to brush the snow off the stick. Perhaps the Senator might come! Mr. Pike might save him; it was a faint chance, the shred of a hope, rather; but the soul of Guthrie clung desperately to it.

His eyes, in spite of himself and his will, wandered from the stick, and were dazzled by the flood that the

sun poured over the snow. The world, tantalising him, suddenly grew brighter. There was a new and deeper tint of blue in the sky; the snow gleamed like marble; countless silver rays flashed from the slopes.

Guthrie went on mechanically with his task, but his brain grew dizzy. The world was in a whirl. His mind ran back through the dim, discoloured mist that is called the past, and then tried to enter the future. But, out of the vagueness, rose one fact, clear and distinct, and it was the knowledge that he wanted to live.

He cast a glance from under his bent brows at the mountaineer and saw him still standing there at the edge of the thicket with his rifle levelled, savage, implacable, never dreaming of mercy.

Another swift glance, and he saw a figure appear in the forest on the left, a tall man wrapped in a long black coat—the Senator. He knew that Dilger, intent upon his victim, had missed the approach of his real enemy. But the Senator, the skilful and wary, would see, and Guthrie waited. The faint hope, that was scarcely a hope, sprang up.

Would he be in time? If only fate would give him ten seconds! If not that, five! Five would be enough, but the Senator might miss, even if he were first! But that was impossible! He ought not to wrong his faithful comrade so.

He longed to look up again, but he dared not glance at either mountaineer. He could not know which finger was nearer the trigger, but he must await, as if in unconcern, that second of difference which meant life or death to him. Nothing that he could do would alter the future by a hair.

The whiteness and glitter of the world dazzled him.



"With rifle levelled, savage, implacable, never dreaming of mercy"

The hand that held the stick became wet. He affected carelessness, and began to hum a song, unconscious of the words he spoke. He grew impatient. Better the bullet of the wrong man than to endure this terrible tension! There was still not a sound in the forest. The snow had ceased to fall from the boughs. He did not hear his own breathing.

His muscles seemed to relax, to give way. His head bent lower. He was afraid that he would fall.

The report of a pistol and a cry so close together that they seemed one, rang in his ears, and, with a wild shout of relief, excitement, and joy, his face white to the brow, Guthrie sprang to his feet as the Senator, a smoking revolver in his hand, ran forward.

The relief from the tension and the expectation of death was so great that Guthrie stood for a few moments white and dizzy. Then, mechanically, he wiped the sweat from his face.

He was aroused from his stupor by the sight of Mr. Pike bent over the fallen man, every line of his face expressing the thought, "O, mine enemy, thou art delivered into my hands!"

Dilger was not dead. Guthrie could see that he was merely stunned by the bullet, as his chest rose and fell with almost regular motion, but his gaze wandered away from the face of the desperado to that of the Senator. Mr. Pike, too, was still the Indian—the garment of civilisation was yet doffed. Beneath his hand lay his mortal enemy, and all his mountain code, imbibed with the milk that he had drawn from his mother's breast, told him to fire again.

Guthrie was still under the spell. He had been fascinated when he saw the muzzle of a rifle aimed at

himself, and now he was motionless when he beheld the finger of Mr. Pike creep toward the trigger of his revolver.

Dilger lay prone and relaxed, and the blood from his wound soaked redly in the snow. Guthrie wondered where the second bullet would strike, and then he saw the muzzle of the Senator's pistol cover the man's heart. Like Dilger, the victor would enjoy for a moment his triumph.

The fallen man stirred, opened his eyes, and looked up. A gleam of intelligence appeared on his face as his gaze met that of his triumphant enemy, and then it became full of malignant ferocity. He was the savage still, asking no mercy, expressing only hate.

"I sent your brother on before," he said in tones feeble but defiant.

The eyes of the Senator flashed, and his finger touched the trigger. Guthrie at that moment remembered, and the fire of the hunter died within him; all his instincts rebelled at what he was about to see.

"Mr. Pike," he exclaimed, "you cannot kill a man who is lying at your mercy!"

"He is a murderer—you heard him—and the enemy of my people!"

But Guthrie had the gift of boldness and eloquence in great emergencies, and now he rose to the crisis. He seized the Senator's uplifted arm, and turned the pistol away; he bade him remember who and what he was, a leader of his people, one who should set to them a great example. The Senator strove to raise the pistol again, but Guthrie held his wrist with a firm hand, and he saw the whole struggle written upon the man's face as it passed in his mind. The old elemental

impulse to kill the enemy who sought to kill him was strong within him; but the voice of a severer and better world of duty was calling in the voice of this friend, who had shared his danger and bade him to remember the new teaching. Guthrie struck the right chord when he appealed to his religion, and the second half of the mountaineer's dual nature, his humble piety, rose in the ascendant. Gradually the flame of passion died in the Senator's eyes, and at last he put the pistol in his pocket, and said to Guthrie:

"You do not know how much you are asking of me!"

"I can guess," replied Guthrie. "He is a murderer, and should be hanged; but let it be done by law."

"Yes, he shall hang," said the Senator fiercely, "if there is justice to be had in the mountains!"

Dilger raised himself on his elbow—they had taken away his weapons—and was gazing wonderingly at his enemy, as if he could not understand his action—and perhaps he could not—but the Senator with folded arms and melancholy eyes merely gazed down at him.

Guthrie suggested that he go to the town for help while Mr. Pike remain on guard, and, as the other nodded assent, he hastened away in the snow, but he looked back once, and saw the erect, black-clothed, and melancholy figure still standing by the fallen man.

Much of Guthrie's excitement slipped from him as he went on. The tenseness of those moments back there had been too great to last, and once more he looked with a seeing eye at the forests, the mountains, and the sky. The snow had fallen again, and the stillness of old reigned in the forest. He no longer saw a human being nor heard the sound of a footstep save his own. The scene back there might have been the phan-

tasy of a moment, but its impression was too deep, too vivid, to pass, and he hastened on to the village.

When he returned with help, they found Dilger still on his elbow, and the Senator yet standing over him, silent and sombre. Great was the surprise of the people to find the leader of the Pikes, with the power of vengeance upon his worst enemy in his hand, and as yet unused; and mingled with this surprise was a strain by no means of approval. What had come upon the Senator? Had he lost a part of his courage? After all, was he fit for leadership? Guthrie remembered those words of the Senator's, "You do not know how much you are asking of me!" and their truth struck home. The chief had fallen a notch in the opinion of his people.

But they took up Dilger, and carried him to the village. His wound was not serious, the mountain doctor said, and they locked him in the little log jail, to await his trial for murder. But Guthrie, as he went about the place, soon saw that other plans were afoot. They were all Pikes in Briarton, and their leader, they said, should have shot Dilger down when he had the chance; since he had not done so—well, they could supply the want of forethought; they knew too much to wait on along trial, the testimony of perjured witnesses, and the innumerable delays that the law knows how to invent. Guthrie saw before him all the elements of a lynching, but these elements were not yet gathered into an aggressive whole, and swift action might prevent it. As there was no one but himself to take the initiative, he resolved to act.

First, however, he would see the Senator, and he went to his house. Alone in the large room where the

body of his brother had rested, he found him sitting—staring out at the mountain side but not seeing it. To Guthrie's great surprise, his whole attitude was that of one crushed; there was no triumph over the capture of his foe, but the droop of one who had failed.

Guthrie, feeling that he was in a sense the intimate friend and associate of the Senator, went up to him, and touched him on the shoulder. The older man raised his pale face.

"Mr. Guthrie," he said, and there was pathos in his voice, "you see me in my shame. I have tried to be a man. I told you once before how I have sought to raise myself above the surroundings amid which I was born—to make myself a leader among my people, a real leader, not one who goes the way they wish him to go, but the way he thinks they ought to go."

"And it seems to me that you are such," said Guthrie. "I do not see wherein you have failed."

"Out there in the forest I failed; when Dilger lay at my mercy, I would have killed him, not from motives of justice, but from revenge. Everything that I have schooled myself for twenty years to learn was swept away by the impulse of a moment. Had you not been there, I should not have held my hand; we are weak clay, Mr. Guthrie!"

Guthrie felt much sorrow, as he liked Mr. Pike and gave him his full esteem. He knew no man whom he held more highly, but, for a few moments, he said nothing, looking out of the window at the snow that was still falling. Then he glanced at Mr. Pike who had settled back in his chair, his whole figure expressive of apathy. He must be roused to action, thought Guthrie, and he spoke to him again. He told him of his fears, of the

talk of a lynching, and he appealed to Mr. Pike's pride. A flash appeared in the Senator's eyes when he heard the news, and his figure swelled anew with life.

"That I will stop!" he exclaimed; "I did not spare Dilger to have them lynch him. My people are against me now; well, I shall give them cause!"

But Guthrie even knew better than the Senator how much he had lost in authority, and, though he did not believe he could prevent what the people in the village were meditating, yet he deemed worth while, for the Senator's own sake, that he should try.

He saw the Senator, as he sought to persuade the people, feel all the pride of having done a right deed. The revulsion had come, and once more he was the civilised man striving for the better path. But Guthrie noted how little Mr. Pike's words affected them, how the vengeful faces did not change, and, long before nightfall, a messenger, heavily paid, was riding over the mountains to Sayville, bearing Guthrie's report of the news and a brief despatch to Governor Hastings, also signed by him and saying, "The leader of the Dilgers is in jail here, and will be lynched unless the militia come at once."

Throughout that night which was dark and lowering, with a raw wind off the peaks, the people were quiet, but the next morning they began to gather again, having received fresh recruits from the surrounding country. Guthrie feared that the explosion would come at once, but then the snow began to fall, not as before slowly and lazily, but in great flakes that trod upon each other heels—so fast they came. Never before had he seen such a day. The sky was rimmed in with heavy, threatening clouds through which the sun

shone with only a faint coppery tint, as if it were the faint reflection of a great fire, and, from these clouds, the snow poured and poured until the last trace of the sun was lost, and there was left only the brown sky above and the white world below.

The snow stopped never for a moment during the day nor during the night that followed, seeming rather to increase in volume, and the next day it was still coming down as fast as ever. The people, forgetting the lynching, huddled in their houses, and Guthrie, at Mr. Pike's, looked out aghast. His messenger had not come back from Sayville—he could not; the snow already lay three feet deep on the levels and untold feet in the clefts and the ravines, and nowhere was there a break in the great white fall.

Day followed day, and the snow still heaped up around Sayville, and the imprisoned Guthrie raged at the thought of the capital and the trial of Carton now at hand, and he far away.

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT SNOW

IN the capital, there was much talk of both Guthrie and the Senator. Guthrie in his world was a personage, and held an established position in public affairs; when he went away, one always felt that something was gone. It was known that he had departed on a moment's notice with Mr. Pike, to watch the course of a mountain feud that might involve larger interests, and the people were curious to hear the result.

Then a telegraphic message came to the Governor from Guthrie, dated at Sayville and saying, "The leader of the Dilgers is in jail here, and will be lynched unless the militia come at once." Then the *Times* came down from the metropolis with a full account of the sensational events at Briarton, and the little capital was stirred by the news.

The Governor was at his house when the despatch was handed to him. After he read it, his face was very grave, as he had the utmost confidence in Guthrie, and knew that he would not send such a message unless there was full need of it. Guthrie was the last man to assume the responsibilities of an official when he was only a private person.

He went into the room where his wife sat with Clarice Ransome and Mary Pelham before a great fire of hickory logs, and, when he saw them, a smile lighted up the

young Governor's somewhat worn face—there had been much to worry him that winter, and his hours of sleep were short and troubled. But he was not blind, and the presence, in his house, of three young and beautiful women, one of whom was his wife, was always a source of cheerfulness.

"You have a telegram," said Lucy, when she saw the slip of yellow paper in his hands. "Who wants an appointment?"

"Nobody; it's a request for something bigger this time."

"And can you give it?" asked Clarice.

"Oh! yes, because in this case I can be an Indian-giver, and take the gift back before long. It's from Mr. William Guthrie, and he wants a whole company of militia."

Clarice had been paying only vague attention before, but now she looked up with keen interest. Then she flushed slightly, and looked into the fire again. In what way did William Guthrie and his deeds concern her? But she thought it necessary to say something.

"Then they have been fighting again up there in the mountains?" she asked.

"I fancy so," replied the Governor. "At least this despatch from Guthrie says that the leader of the Dilgers is in jail at Briarton, and will certainly be lynched unless I send a company of militia to hold the place."

"There must have been fighting," said Clarice. She felt a thrill of mingled excitement and apprehension. She had been reading a letter from Raoul that morning—a letter full of pretty phrases and the lighter gossip of Old World capitals, and again she made the involuntary contrast. She could not conceive of Raoul up there

among the peaks with those wild mountaineers, risking his life perhaps. Raoul always dressed beautifully, and his manners were irreproachable, which facts appealed to her, but—she liked masculinity in men. She was troubled by her thoughts, and again she feared that she was unjust to Raoul, the man whom she was to marry.

“Why so solemn, Miss Ransome?” asked the Governor, noticing her grave face.

She shook her head, as if she would not answer that question, and smiled.

“I think you are trying to get advice as to what to do,” she said, “and I refuse to give it. You are Governor, and you must carry the burdens of the office.”

“Oh, I don’t need any advice in this matter!” said Paul in the same vein, and then changing to an earnest manner: “I have complete confidence in Guthrie; as a matter of fact, the county officials should apply for the militia company, but, within half an hour, I shall order the company at Waterford, which is just at the edge of the mountains, to proceed in all haste to Briarton and hold the jail there. I sincerely hope that nothing will happen to Guthrie.”

He looked obliquely but keenly at Clarice when he spoke of Guthrie, but she, gazing into the fire again, seemed not to notice, and the faint deepening of the red in her cheeks might easily be the reflection of its blaze.

But Lucy spoke.

“I do not believe that anything will happen to Mr. Guthrie,” she said. “If anybody can take care of himself, it is he.”

The Governor went to the window, and looked anxiously at the sweep of hills about the capital.

“I fear ugly weather,” he said. “Look at those dirty

brown clouds—they are stuffed so full of snow that they seem ready to burst this very minute!”

It had been snowing lightly that morning, and afterward the sun shone for a while; but, as the Governor spoke the clouds opened again, and the great heavy flakes began to fall. In a few moments, the air was filled with the dropping shower.

This State is called southern by those in the North, but it is to be remembered that it is called northern by those farther south, and it knows long and cold winters. This was famous as the “winter of the great snow.” It fell throughout the whole length of the State from east to west nearly four hundred miles, and, even in the low and level country, three feet of it lay, while, in the mountains, it was heaped to incredible depths.

At eleven o'clock that night, the Governor received from the captain of the Waterford militia which had reached Sayville, a telegram stating the inability of his men to penetrate even a mile from the railroad station among the peaks and ridges. “All the mountains are wrapped in a vast mass of whirling snow,” the telegram said. In fact, at that moment, the captain, who was brave from head to toe, was standing at the door of the lonely little railroad station, trying to pierce the darkness with his eyes. Gusts of snow drove into his face, and the whirlwinds enveloped him.

“I’m afraid we can’t start for Briarton now,” he said.

“No, nor to-morrow, nor the next day, nor next week!” the station-master said, and he was right. When another week had passed, the Waterford company was still in Sayville, vainly seeking to pierce a way through the gigantic snow-drifts. And out of Briarton, now as good as a thousand miles away, not a word

came. Guthrie's messenger was there in Sayville with the militia company, and he, too, trained mountaineer though he was, could not break a path to his home.

After the second day, the capital itself was isolated for a while. The snow-drifts heaped up on the railroad tracks and the trains from either East or West were unable to come. Then the telegraph wires broke under the gathering weight, and the great world slipped away from them. The capital, rimmed in by its white hills, was their own little world now, disconnected from all else; they were as ignorant of what was passing in the metropolis of the State as they were of the domestic affairs of the Siberians!

To Clarice, it had all the charm of novelty and isolation, without danger or discomfort. They were as snug there in the little capital as they could be in New York or Paris; they had all the comforts and the luxuries, too, save the single one of knowing what the rest of the world was doing, and, for the time, Clarice even enjoyed that lack.

The great fires still blazed in the wide fireplaces of the Governor's house, and the brightness within was merely accentuated by the ramparts of snow without. Senators and members of the House still went to the Capitol at the regular hours, and made, or tried to make, laws for a people shut out from them by a snowy wall. Jimmy Warfield said it was the most glorious bit of freedom that he had enjoyed in all his public career; he did not hear a single complaint from his constituents.

But the trial of Carton moved on to its crisis. Mr. Harlow was ever in the background, active but shadowy and evasive, and no man could put his hand on him. Carton's friends sought in every way to delay action, but

their efforts were unavailing, for the hidden hand was pushing on the majority. The chairman of the prosecuting committee in the appointed five days laid the charge before the Senate, which, according to the Constitution, resolved itself into a trial court, and set a time for the beginning of the evidence.

Jimmy Warfield made a quiet but most dexterous canvass of the Senate, and, to his grief, he found that a majority of the Democrats were certainly against Carton. What the Republicans would do was a mystery—a mystery even to themselves, and all the deeper because of the absence of their leader, Senator Pike. They floundered about, headless; and the eyes of both sides strained vainly toward that tiny hamlet now buried in the depths of the snow-clad mountains.

But Guthrie was missed most of all by Carton and his friends. They had not appreciated until now what a power he was on their side, nor realised the full extent of his quiet strength, his unfailing tact, and the calm optimism which made others unconsciously rely upon him. He was, so Jimmy Warfield now openly said, the real leader of the Carton defence, and it went lamely without him. But Clarice felt a sudden resentment against Guthrie because she heard so much about him even in his absence. It seemed to her that people might find some other subject; there were other attractive young men in the world, and again she enumerated to herself Raoul's good qualities.

The trains began to run again, the telegraph wires were restored, and the capital resumed its connection with the outside world, fresher and more piquant now because of the lost days. But there was no word from

Briarton, as the snow yet lay impassable in the mountains.

An important arrival in the capital just after the trains resumed running was that of Mrs. Ransome, the imperious mother of Clarice. Mrs. Ransome, with an inborn pride, always asserted herself, and she had good cause for her sense of importance. John Ransome, her husband, was a great merchant and a millionaire in the metropolis of a State that has few millionaires, and consequently he was a figure in his home city. His big white stone house on the "Avenue" with the wide, green lawns about it was pointed out to all visitors, and so was Mrs. Ransome, if she happened at the moment to be alighting importantly from her carriage or entering it.

Mr. and Mrs. Ransome early arrived at a satisfactory division of work: Mr. Ransome made the money, and Mrs. Ransome spent it in the proper manner. It was said that, at their first grand reception, when they began their great rise in the world and moved into their big house, now more than fifteen years ago, some one in the course of the evening asked for Mr. Ransome, and he could be found nowhere in the crowded rooms. Discreet servants quietly sent by the capable Mrs. Ransome to seek him at last discovered him in the cellar, enjoying a quiet game of poker with three cronies who had crossed the plains with him in the early sixties when they were all boys. All four were in their shirt-sleeves, and occasionally they took a modest drink of beer when there was champagne to waste above stairs. He stubbornly refused, too, to put on his coat again and reappear in the parlours until the game was finished and the stakes had been disposed of in a satisfactory manner.

Mr. Ransome, though in the main tractable, had some other obstinate and disagreeable qualities. He would not cast off the friends of his youth who had not prospered as much as he. Occasionally, he brought them to dinner or to evening receptions to meet society for which, as Mrs. Ransome truly said, they were obviously unfit. He had been known to commit the hideous solecism of looking bored in the presence of brilliant social stars, and once or twice, in unguarded moments, he had spoken contemptuously of young men who were known to be brilliant makers of amusement in society. As Mrs. Ransome once said, when moved beyond endurance by such a *faux pas* of her husband, he had not risen in some respects to his station. Yet he was, on the whole, a good man and highly esteemed in commercial circles and the business life of the city.

Nor did Mr. Ransome interfere greatly with the training of their daughter and only child. He made some mild objections when Clarice was sent to Paris to get a real education—he always had a healthy indifference for foreign countries, the United States being good enough for him—but they were soon overruled by his more forcible spouse. When, the education being finished, Mrs. Ransome went over for her daughter, and remained to spend a season in the “world’s capital,” Mr. Ransome bore her absence with Christian resignation. He exhibited a childish joy when his daughter came home again, but he was strangely silent when his wife informed him of Clarice’s brilliant engagement to Count Raoul d’Estournelle, whose lineage dated to the Crusades and beyond; and when she intimated with pride that it was more than half due to her own adroit management, Mr. Ransome’s sole and somewhat dis-

concerting comment was, "I wonder if he will ever learn to play poker with me." But he was very tender to his daughter.

Mrs. Ransome, with some misgivings, had allowed Clarice to visit the Governor's wife; it seemed to her that it would be a period of eclipse, for the capital she knew from accounts to be a stuffy little place, almost out of the world, and she had proudly told her friends in Paris that she had never visited it, although she had lived all her life only a hundred miles away. But the Governor's wife was quite a personage, and undeniably, the name sounded well. She could speak of it, and so, yielding to Clarice's urgent entreaty, she let her go.

Now Mrs. Ransome was becoming dissatisfied, and, if the truth must be told, she felt a faint alarm. Certain reports in regard to Clarice were coming from the capital; she was showing a remarkable interest in the people by whom she was surrounded and in the events occurring about her. She rarely spoke of Raoul, it was said, and she had shown an undue partiality for the society of an obscure young man, a mere writer for the newspapers. This in itself had no very formidable sound, but Mrs. Ransome was a careful and far-seeing woman, and she took action. She would have recalled Clarice, but the set term of her visit was not reached, and such a course would have been too awkward for a skilful diplomatist like Mrs. Ransome; so she came in person to the capital in order to survey the field.

Mrs. Ransome did not advise Clarice of her coming, but took apartments at the big hotel where everybody stopped, and in the afternoon drove to the Governor's house. Clarice saw the carriage at the door, and glancing out recognised the portly form of her mother who

had just alighted. She was surprised—pleased, yet not wholly pleased, but she greeted Mrs. Ransome warmly, and the introductions were duly made.

Mrs. Ransome put on her most important manner. Clarice's friends were young women, but little older than Clarice herself, and her own great knowledge of the world gave her a conscious superiority. She was surprised, too, to find the Governor's wife so very youthful and so gentle in manner—scarcely adequate to her place, it seemed to Mrs. Ransome, and her manner toward Mrs. Hastings became somewhat patronising. Clarice felt a growing irritation as the call proceeded, an annoyance not decreased when her mother brought Raoul into the talk in a rather obtrusive manner.

Mrs. Ransome not only introduced the subject of Raoul, but also dwelt upon it. The young nobleman was such a model, all the gifts were his! He was so graceful, so gallant, and of such an old family! The d'Estournelles were in the Crusades, and they were related to half the great people of Europe. And Raoul was coming over in May! They should see him then. Oh, such a presence and such manners!

Clarice listened with reddening cheeks, but she did not have anything to say. She was glad when her mother declined the invitation to stay at the Governor's house during her visit to the capital.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Ransome; "I could not break in upon this circle of young people! Like likes like, you know, and I am here for only two or three days."

Clarice drove back with her mother to the hotel. Mrs. Ransome settled herself comfortably on the carriage cushion, and said to her daughter,

"Nice people, my dear, but provincial—very provincial!"

Clarice flushed indignantly.

"Mother," she said, "they are not provincial, I like them very much, and—and——"

She hesitated.

"Well, what is it?"

"I wish you would not try to patronise them, mother. They saw it as I did—and mother, they cannot be patronised!"

Clarice was flushed and embarrassed, but she was glad that she had spoken. Mrs. Ransome fixed her daughter with a cold eye.

"Clarice," she said, "you have inherited some of your father's traits. John Ransome is a good man—none knows it better than I, his wife, and none is readier to proclaim it; but he has never been fully conscious of his large position in the world. I have tried my best to awaken in him this sense of responsibility, but I have failed. I thought that I had educated you better, and I was proud of my work, but I begin to fear that I have failed in part."

Clarice rarely said anything when her mother adopted her majestic manner, but she hid a smile. Her father was very dear to her, and, if she had inherited any of his traits, it was cause for gladness and pride. Mrs. Ransome resented the silence of her daughter, and came to the point rather abruptly.

"Clarice," she said, "I have heard of a certain young man named Guthrie, a newspaper writer, I believe, who, I am told, is a somewhat conspicuous figure in the set in which you move here. Where is he now?"

The colour deepened in Clarice's cheeks, and then

she was angry, but, in a moment, the feeling was gone. A slight sense of amusement took its place. She had plenty of courage.

"Yes," she replied, "Mr. Guthrie is a favourite among the people whom I know here, but nothing has been heard of him for a week."

"Why, what do you mean? Has the man absconded?"

"Oh, no! He is merely lost."

"Lost?"

"Yes, lost under the snow."

"Please explain your meaning," said Mrs. Ransome with some haughtiness.

"Just before the great snow, mother, he went up into the fastnesses of the mountains with Mr. Pike, a State senator, to help fight in a feud."

"To help fight in a feud? What a shocking thing! Is the man a desperado?"

"Oh, no, not at all! Mr. Guthrie merely went along to see and to report the news. Mr. Pike is to do the fighting. But the snow came, and they cannot get out of the mountains or send any word. So we do not know what has happened, and they tell me it may be another week before we can hear."

Mrs. Ransome felt relief. Providence had kindly taken this objectionable Guthrie out of the way for a while at least, but she did not relax her sternness.

"Clarice," she said, "I am sorry that I ever let you come here. You seem to have become acquainted with such queer people. Do you know this creature, this savage—the Senator who has gone up in the mountains to fight?"

"Oh, yes, mother, I know Mr. Pike well, and he is such a noble man! You could not help liking him. So earnest, so honest, and so open."

Mrs. Ransome gazed at her daughter in astonishment.

"Clarice," she said, "I am amazed at you! Do you tell me that you like a rude, wild mountaineer, that you have been meeting him in society here? What a singular condition of affairs!"

"But, mother, it is your State as well as mine—mountaineers and all."

Mrs. Ransome did not reply to this shaft, as they had conveniently reached the hotel, but she took her daughter with her to her rooms, and gave her much good advice, to which Clarice listened dutifully.

Mrs. Ransome speedily made the acquaintance of the Pelhams, who were at the same hotel, and she liked the General better than anybody else whom she met in the capital. He had a fine, large manner that impressed her, and in a life, the most of which had been spent in this State of her birth, she could not help having heard of the Pelhams. Moreover, they had many feelings in common concerning the state of certain affairs in the little city, and this was another tie to bind them. Of Mrs. Pelham herself she took little notice, considering her an insignificant little thing not worthy of much attention.

Mrs. Ransome had the habit of writing letters to her husband about the current affairs in which she was interested. She knew that Mr. Ransome often failed to appreciate these vital issues, and she mourned the fact, but habit was strong, and she must have some one to whom to pour out her soul. On the second day after

her arrival in the capital, she wrote to him, and again on the day following.

Mr. Ransome, as she had truly foreseen, was not deeply impressed by her news, but his attention was fixed when he came to the name of his daughter Clarice. Mrs. Ransome seemed to be having trouble with Clarice; the girl, for some singular reason, had developed a streak of quiet stubbornness. Apparently, she had been influenced by surroundings of which her mother did not approve; there were many queer people at the capital—government at best was a hodgepodge anywhere—and, the place itself being so small, one could not well avoid them. Clarice, she feared, was developing tastes that were not progressive. She would bring her daughter away at once, but she did not wish to be abrupt, nor did she care to increase the spirit of stubbornness that Clarice was developing in the most unexpected and unpleasant manner.

John Ransome smiled when he came to the end of this letter, and then he read it all over again. He was pleased—why, he was hardly able to tell himself. He loved his wife, and he loved his daughter, and, apparently, there was nothing in a prospective conflict between the two to rejoice the heart of a husband and father; but such were his feelings nevertheless. He wrote to his wife a rather longer letter than usual, suggesting that Clarice be allowed to stay the set time of her visit.

Events now began to move more rapidly at the capital. It was noticed that Caius Marcellus Harlow never left the place. Formerly, he would disappear for brief seasons, but now he was constant in his attendance. Coincidentally, the case against Carton made swift prog-

ress; the Senate was already taking evidence, and Mr. Pursley was a leading prosecutor; he disclaimed all personal hostility; he professed rather to like Carton, and his attitude was that of a man, astonished and grieved by a friend's dereliction—a manner very potent with the weaker members of the Legislature, and also with that larger body of the public which is ready to believe any evil of those in office.

Templeton, too, suddenly began to appear as an enemy of Carton and a defender of the public virtue. His defalcation having been paid back to the Government by others, nothing more was heard about it, and he bloomed anew—or rather, he had never ceased to bloom. He could tell things, if he would, it was said, and there was talk of his taking the witness stand, but, so far, he had not been called by the Senate.

Carton grew colder and haughtier than ever. All questions put by the Senate he answered readily, but in the most indifferent manner; his attitude seemed to imply that the opinion of the Senate was not worth anything, and Jimmy Warfield, who knew human nature, believed in his heart that two or three senators would vote against him solely on that account.

Warfield began now to lament the absence of Senator Pike. The snow was a great misfortune. He did not know how Mr. Pike would have voted; he might be against Carton, but it was quite certain that without him Carton was lost. The headless Republican body in the Senate showed signs of drifting with the majority.

The only rock that the prosecution struck was the unexpected action of Senator Cobb, who, it was well known, was much opposed to Carton. He arose in the Senate one cold morning, and announced that he was

opposed to such rapid action. A most influential member of the Senate was not present, he said, and could not attend for some days. A verdict in his absence would be snap judgment. The people should always be for fair play; if the presence of Senator Pike meant help for an accused man, then the accused man should have it. As for himself, he would fight any movement to bring the matter to a vote until the missing senator had returned.

There was a sudden burst of applause from the gallery when Senator Cobb sat down, but the prosecution, nevertheless, pushed the matter with the utmost vigour. But Senator Cobb was true to his word, and, with a parliamentary skill and persistence that aroused the admiration of everybody, he began to fight for delay. In the Senate was the curious spectacle of an influential member who opposed Carton fighting for him—that is, to give him more time.

Thus affairs stood at the capital, and the snow still lay in the mountains.

CHAPTER XII

GUTHRIE AND THE SENATOR

DEEP in the mountains, the time was passing all too slowly for Guthrie and the Reverend Zedekiah Pike. Guthrie fretted, and looked up at the white peaks around him, but he had little else to do. He was shut out from the world as completely as if he were on an island in the South Seas. Once there were signs of a thaw, and a cold rain fell, but in a few hours it turned colder again than ever, and the rain froze on the surface of the snow, making a glistening sheet of ice. It was now impossible to travel more than a quarter of a mile from the village, and even the wisest of the mountain prophets could not predict a change. The goose-bone had foretold a hard winter, and they had no right to expect anything else.

The talk of lynching was not revived for the present, but Guthrie knew that it would come up again when the snow melted; so he was glad that he had sent his message to the Governor. But the public feeling against Mr. Pike afflicted him. The Senator, by his unaccountable action in sparing Dilger when he was at his mercy, had forfeited the esteem of his own party. People could not understand him; his action violated all tradition and right feeling; he was accused of a want of respect for the memory of his murdered brother; it was popularly said that he was the first Pike who had ever

flinched. His own near relatives became rather shy of him, and he was forced to rely more and more upon the companionship of Guthrie, who felt for him the deepest and sincerest sympathy, when he saw all that the Senator had forfeited for the sake of the new and higher feelings learned from the world outside.

But upon Guthrie himself, although he was known to be the intimate friend of Senator Pike, none of this hostility was visited. He was a stranger, a man not meddling in the feud, who had come there to stay a while among them, forced now by stress of circumstances to remain longer than he intended, and the primitive and great virtue of hospitality was exercised to the full in his case. If it had not been for his anxieties about affairs at the capital, he could have thoroughly enjoyed his life in this walled-in dell in the mountains, and, despite these cares, it was not without many attractions. Beauty of the grand and picturesque sort was there in abundance. He saw it all around him in the ridges and the peaks sheathed in their armour of glittering ice that flashed in rays of yellow and silver under the wintry, but none the less brilliant sun. The trees were clad to the last, least twig in the same white coats of mail, and, silhouetted against the sky, they looked like gigantic pieces of carving in ice. Just above the village, where the little river dashed over a fall, the cataract was frozen, and now and then a brilliant rainbow flashed its colours there.

The village itself was snug and warm. Nearly all the houses were built of logs, and the surrounding forest furnished an abundant supply of fuel. In every inhabited building, a great fire blazed and crackled, and there was an abundance of food, too—most of it coarse

and rough, but winter work and a winter air made its taste good enough.

It was now that Guthrie began to show his wonderful quality of adaptation, a trait in his nature that made him acceptable everywhere, and liked by people of widely varying types. He had such a keen zest in life, such a readiness to see that people are chiefly the creatures of their circumstances, and such a desire to see the good in them, that he always approached strangers with a friendly prepossession—a feeling that naturally bred reciprocity. He had not been in Briarton a week before he knew every one of its inhabitants, and, without effort on his part to acquire favour, he was the most popular man there. He assumed no airs of superiority, he helped the people to dig their roads through the snow, now and then he cut wood in order to keep his muscles in trim, he said, and, the night when the Widow Connor's house caught fire, he was first on the roof with a bucket of water to put out the flames. When the fire was out and he slipped on the icy boards, plunging head first into a five-foot snow-drift, he joined with entire heartiness in the laugh against him. And then when the Widow Connor, out of sheer gratitude, kissed him on the cheek, Guthrie returned the salute in such a gallant manner that he won the applause of the entire population gathered there in an admiring circle.

He put the capstone to this edifice of popular esteem when he beat Eli Pike, a second cousin of the Senator, at rifle-shooting. Eli was the champion of the county, and when Guthrie, by a most singular piece of luck, bored a hole right through the centre of the target, a silver coin posted on the trunk of a tree, and then put the rifle aside with an air that seemed to say, "I can do

a little thing like that fifty times a day," there was nothing in the village that he could not have. People said, "Why, he don't put on no airs at all; he's jest as easy as an old shoe!"

Guthrie was conscious of his growing power and he used it without cessation for his friend the Senator. He was speaking continually—but only in an indirect manner—of the Senator's great influence, of the leadership conceded to him by the Republican party—not because he sought it, but because of his high character and abilities; he emphasised the glory that he was shedding upon the mountains in general, upon his county in particular, and upon Briarton most of all. Invariably, in his talk with the mountaineers, he quoted the Senator's standard of conduct as a rule of life, and he measured all things by it. Such and such a thing at the capital was right, he often said, because Senator Pike approved it; he gave no other reason—that Senator Pike said so was sufficient.

He was soon happy to see that his method was producing good results. The people, without knowing why, began to look upon Senator Pike's conduct with more leniency. Guthrie's office, too, added weight to his words. It was soon known that he was the representative of the State's greatest newspaper, who had come into the mountains to write about them. It was evident that he liked the people, and therefore fell into their ways with the greatest ease. With them, print had a sanctity unshaken by every-day use, and, in their eyes, the man who wrote things appearing in type was great in his day. They weighed in their minds whether he was not as great as a State senator, or at least as great as a member of the House. Certainly, the occupation

had about it an air of mystery and romance lacking even in the office-holder.

Guthrie was able to repay the hospitality of his host in yet another way. The Senator, feeling himself an outcast, grew heavy and melancholy, and felt, too, that he was now neglecting his duty in being absent from the capital at so critical a time. He did not excuse himself because it was manifestly the hand of God that kept him away. Guthrie became indispensable to the stricken man. With his own hands, he piled the logs upon the fire, and watched the blaze roar up the chimney. He never abated one whit from his cheerful tone. He talked of the ever-recurring topics of public life, not only of office-holding and law-making, but of the other affairs of the larger world—of science and society, of life and literature. He had noticed that the Senator was often in the fine library in the Capitol building, and now he found that the mountaineer was almost wholly self-taught. His taste was chiefly for history and biography. He had read extensively about ancient kingdoms and republics—nearly always pronouncing the proper names wrong, because no one had ever told him better—and Guthrie was surprised to find that his admiration was for the Greek democracy rather than for the all-conquering Roman State. He had thought that Rome would appeal most to a mountaineer in whose country might counted for so much. But Mr. Pike liked the humanity and mercy of the Greek character, and Guthrie thought he saw in it the key to his rebellion against a prevalent mountain custom.

Guthrie went once to see Dilger in the jail. The feud leader was completely recovered from his wound

—he had merely been stunned by the glancing impact of a bullet against his thick skull, followed by a few hours' paralysis of the muscles—and he found him insolent, defiant, and wholly unrepentant. Yes, he had killed the younger Pike, and he was glad of it; he would serve the older brother the same way if he had the chance, and he expected to have it some day; did they think they would hang him? They would learn better before long. He sneered at the Senator. He did not believe that Mr. Pike had spared him through any moral scruples; such a thought had never entered his head, nor could it have been driven there with a hammer and a chisel; he did not know what moral scruples were, or what the phrase meant. No, the Senator was simply a coward; the blood in his veins was white; when it came to shooting a man, he had lost his nerve, he was a woman in man's clothes. Dilger laughed in contempt.

On the tenth night after Guthrie's arrival, Dilger broke jail, and fled along one of the newly opened paths in the snow up the mountain side. It was Senator Pike who responded first to the alarm, and led the pursuit through the snow and the forest. In some way, a revolver had been smuggled to Dilger, and, when the Senator, separated from the rest of his party, overtook him, a duel ensued between this servant of the law and the desperado, fighting for his life. Mr. Pike escaped without a wound, but Dilger fell with a bullet through his shoulder. A second time, the Senator spared the life of his deadliest enemy, and brought him bleeding into Briarton, amid a crowd of spectators, who could not now refuse admiration. Certainly, no one could impugn the courage of the Senator, for single-handed

he had fought his enemy as before, wounded him, and brought him in a prisoner. Nor could they deny him consistency, for, in the face of ostracism and all that is precious to a man, he had stood by his principles. Might there not be something in such beliefs if one was willing to pay so great a price to sustain them?

Guthrie was in the crowd that stood by when the Senator brought in Dilger. It was three o'clock of a very cold morning, and the little street was lighted up by torches. Dilger, pale and weak, had been given to the constable, and near him stood the Senator, silent and stern. Back of all were the snow-clad mountains gleaming through the darkness. The scene stirred Guthrie to the depths, and, springing upon a stump, he cried:

"Gentlemen, our Bible says that he who ruleth himself is greater than he who taketh a city; therefore, I call for a cheer for the greatest man in the mountains, the bravest man in the mountains, for a man who has done what few of us would dare to do, a man who single-handed has taken a desperado fighting for his life, a man who stands among us to-night, blood kin to nearly all of you—the Honourable Zedekiah Pike."

His sonorous periods, his cumulative sentences, pleased the mountaineers, and touched a chord already attuned to a response. They, too, unconsciously had begun to feel the strain of the difference between them and their leader, and at the sudden sight of him, standing there a hero—a hero acknowledged and admired by this representative of an outside world, all their old esteem and liking came back with a rush, and they burst into a spontaneous cheer.

Some of them crowded forward to shake the hand of

Mr. Pike and to tell how much they admired him. Again the shifting picture etched itself deeply on Guthrie's mind: the tall, black-haired Senator, his features still stern and unrelaxed; the crowd about him; the fallen captive in the background; the smoking torches, and the great rim of snowy mountains.

Gradually the heart of the Senator melted before the surrender of his people, and Guthrie saw a mist appear in his eyes. There was a little tightness at his own heart, and he felt the glow of a good deed well done.

Dilger was again confined in the jail, and his guard was increased until the law should take its course; and then Guthrie and the Senator walked slowly home, neither speaking. Guthrie saw that his companion was deeply moved, and he knew that a great burden had been lifted from his back. As for himself, he was thinking of Clarice Ransome. What would she, with her foreign education, say of such a scene as this? Would it not appear to her wild and singular—a piece out of another world than hers?

The good relations established in a burst of emotion under the torchlight between Senator Pike and Briarton retained their warmth in the cold light of the days that followed. The people flowed through the Senator's house again, paying friendly calls, asking his advice about public and private matters, and putting him back in his old place—the place in which he belonged—as leading man of the village, made such by sheer merit.

The Senator never spoke of the matter to Guthrie, whom he now treated almost as a son—the companion and loyal friend of his adversity; but he talked freely

of affairs at the capital, and Guthrie, taking his cue, uttered many a good word for Carton, never abruptly, nor badly, but always indirectly and in its proper connection.

Mr. Pike was much troubled, and at last told his views upon this important question.

"Personally, I like Mr. Carton," but he has serious faults, he said. "He seems to me to be somewhat arrogant, to consult too little the feelings of the other members of the House—in short, to lack tact (and that is a serious fault in the leader of any legislative body), but it had not occurred to me that he could be guilty of corruption."

"Then you would vote for him in his trial before the Senate?" asked Guthrie, scarcely able to conceal his eagerness.

"Unless more evidence is produced than has been made known to me, I should do so," replied the Senator.

Guthrie was wise enough not to push the question further, and now he was more eager than ever to escape from the mountains. He knew that the trial of Carton must be approaching its climax, and he knew, too, that the balance of forces present at the capital was against him. He looked up at the overhanging mountains of white. There was no sign of a thaw. A road had been broken a distance of three or four miles, but it was folly to attempt the entire journey to Sayville; one must turn back or perish in the mountains. Although Guthrie did not know it, the Waterford militia company was still at Sayville, waiting like himself for the first sign of a thaw, and eager to get through to Briarton.

One afternoon, a wind blowing out of the north

arose, but in an hour it veered around to the southwest, and its breath was warm. If it lasted, the snow would begin to melt soon, and the weather prophet of the village said that it would last. Evidently he understood his business, because, when the twilight came, the southwest wind was still blowing, and the frozen surface of the snow was softening. After dark, the water began to drip from the roofs.

Guthrie sat that evening with Mr. Pike, and they still talked of the capital and the affairs of the State, both increasingly eager for the journey, now that the snow was melting and the mountains were about to be unlocked. The Senator showed a quiet but serene satisfaction; he seemed to Guthrie to have grown in mental breadth and stature in the last few days; his successful issue from his great trial had solidified and strengthened him, and Guthrie foresaw in him a Republican leader of weight and character. A partisan Democrat himself by birth, training, association, and conviction, he knew that the State needed a stronger and healthier opposition than the Republicans had ever been able to furnish, and he expected Mr. Pike to gather together the scattered forces and to make them cohesive and energetic.

The Senator spoke by and by of Templeton and his defalcation, of which he had known. He held that Templeton should not have been excused because his friends paid back the money; he should have been exposed, nor was that enough: he should have been sent to prison—it was the plain law.

“I heard that you had written an account of it for the *Times*, Mr. Guthrie,” he said, “and that you were induced by the Bishop to withdraw it.”

Guthrie said nothing; he was willing to let the affair stand at that, and Mr. Pike spoke on, not noticing Guthrie's failure to answer.

"It did no good to save Templeton," he said, "because he was saved only for the moment. He will commit another and greater offence, and he is sure to come to a bad end in time. Even now he is pretending to be a lobbyist, and he has all sorts of wild and grandiloquent schemes. I heard him boasting once, when he had drunk too much, that he had only to say the word, and he could go to New York any day he chose, and work for a firm of brokers at ten thousand dollars a year. Ten thousand dollars is a great deal of money. Nobody in the mountains ever made that much, year after year."

Guthrie had been listening with interest, but now he became suddenly eager and intent. He had the gift of intuition, or rather, a logical way of connecting seemingly irrelevant facts.

"Did Templeton mention the name of the brokerage firm that was willing to pay him so good a salary?" he asked.

The Senator meditated a moment.

"He spoke the name," he replied, "but I had to think a little before I could recall it. It was Purvis & Eaton. I remember his words—they were: 'I can get ten thousand dollars a year from a firm of brokers in New York. Purvis & Eaton will be glad to pay me that much any day I say I'm willing to take the job.' Yes, those were his words. Do you think that he was lying, Mr. Guthrie?"

"I do not know," replied Guthrie, and in a few moments he spoke of something else. But his thoughts

remained on Templeton, and they were tumultuous.

In his heart, Guthrie did not believe that Templeton had been lying—at least not absolutely; he might have exaggerated the sum, but there was a basis. Why should Purvis & Eaton, a brokerage firm of New York, presumably powerful, offer a large salary to an obscure young man in a distant little city—a young man without experience in the financial world?

Guthrie rapidly put two and two together, and came swiftly to his conclusion. He listened with pleasure to the increasing drip, drip, of the melting snow from the roof, and he heard the steady breath of the warm southwest wind on the window-pane. The great thaw had begun, and, in a few days, the road through the mountains would be open, but Guthrie no longer turned his face toward the little capital. He resolved that, when he reached Sayville, the train should bear him eastward and not westward.

In the little capital, too, the warm wind from the southwest was blowing, and it blew all through that night, the next day, and the next night, too. The sheet of ice on the surface of the snow disappeared, the snow itself melted as if under the rays of a July sun, and the water poured in torrents from the hills. The river rose many feet, and Clarice, looking through her window at the world rising from its robe of white, felt a thrill that she was afraid to define.

All of Carton's friends, all of the people in the "Governor's set," were saying that the Senator and Guthrie would soon be back. A curious feeling of relief, for which they could not have accounted if asked, per-

vaded them. No one knew how the Senator would vote, or how he would influence his fellow Republicans, and Guthrie had no vote at all.

Senator Cobb, backed up and aided in every way by Jimmy Warfield, who, though a member of the House, was not without influence in the Senate, had just fought off a vote, despite the pressure of Pursley, and Harlow, and all the others. Templeton, too, was doing a little quiet lobbying, and it was said that he would shortly leave the little city for a larger field. Finally, word came that the road from Briarton was open to the venturesome, and arrivals from there might be expected in the capital on the morrow.

Clarice was sitting with her mother, Mrs. Hastings, and Mary Pelham when this news was told and Mrs. Ransome's look was ironical.

"I suppose that quite a fuss will be made over this young Guthrie when he returns," she said. "Everybody talks of him as if he were something quite out of the common!"

"We think that he is above the average," said Lucy Hastings with quiet dignity, "and all of us like him because he is so unselfish and so devoted to his friends. Paul said last night that no one could be missed from the capital more than he had been, and I think so, too."

Mrs. Ransome flushed slightly, and made no reply. She had not found it to her advantage to quarrel with the Governor's wife and her friends, and, as all her efforts at patronising were skilfully turned aside, she was forced for the time to choose some other course. She glanced at Clarice, who had gone to the window, and was looking out at the melting snow and torrents of water that ran down the gutters.

Clarice was unhappy. She resented her mother's implication that she was neglecting Raoul—or rather the memory of Raoul, as Raoul himself was five thousand miles away—but the insinuation was true, and she knew it. However, it would be only for a little while, she told herself; these were her people, and it was natural that she should be interested in them; this was her country, and Europe was not, although it was to be—she did not thrill at this last thought.

She could not deny to herself that she should be glad to see Guthrie—but it was only her curiosity, she said, that she would gratify. Guthrie's vigorous, masculine life, his keen interest in the affairs of the world, and his energy and optimism appealed to her. And this journey of his into the mountains on such an errand, and then the coming of the great snow enclosing and shutting out him and Mr. Pike, had the savour of knight-errantry—there would be a fine story to tell, and she relished tales of adventure.

Above all, she keenly resented the presence of her mother in the guise of a mentor. She knew perfectly well why Mrs. Ransome had come to the capital; no quibble or excuse could conceal it from her, and she was angry that she should be treated as a child.

Paul Hastings came in, and after the customary words of greeting, said:

“Wilson”—Wilson was the lieutenant-governor and, therefore, president of the Senate—“tells me that he has just had a telegram from Senator Pike at Sayville, saying that he will arrive here at noon to-morrow, and——”

He paused, and looked rather curiously around the little circle.

"And Mr. Guthrie comes with him?" asked Mrs. Hastings.

"Guthrie," the Senator added, "was to take the eastbound train at midnight for New York."

Clarice, despite herself, looked up in surprise. Mrs. Ransome breathed a silent sigh of relief.

"Why on earth is he doing that?" asked Mrs. Hastings.

"I do not know," replied the Governor.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE REALMS OF FINANCE

GUTHRIE made the trip to Sayville with Mr. Pike, and it is one that he will never forget. The mountains shed water. Rivers of it dashed through every ravine, and now and then the melting snow, undermined at the base, poured down in tons. But the two escaped all dangers, and at last reached the railroad station. A mile from their destination, they met the Waterford militia company already on the march for Briarton. Guthrie told the captain that the people would now make no attempt to lynch Dilger, but the officer, true to his orders, kept on his way, and in due time reached the village.

At the station, Guthrie informed Mr. Pike that he was going to New York instead of the capital, and the Senator looked his surprise, but said nothing.

"It's of great importance," said Guthrie, "but I hope to be back soon."

He sent a despatch to his home office, telling of his errand and his hopes—again taking the chance of approval—and a little later he boarded an east-bound local train, receiving a hearty grasp of the hand and farewell from Mr. Pike, who was yet at the station, waiting for his own westward train.

Fifty miles farther on, where the expresses make

their only stop in the mountains, he left the "local" and waited for the through train for New York, which arrived an hour late, and, picking him up, whirled him on eastward.

Guthrie was in a berth in one of the finest trains that runs between the East and the Middle West, one that skims every day over the mountains, its passengers surrounded by luxury, never realising the primitive wilderness through which they are shot at the rate of forty miles an hour. But it was all real and vital to Guthrie, who was beginning to understand its passions and its sentiments, and who, as he sat amid the plush, and the mahogany, and the polished brass, had a singular little longing for tiny, lonely Briarton in its cove among the peaks.

But his mind soon turned to the task before him—no light one—and, having always made it a rule to secure rest when rest was needed, he went to bed, and in half an hour was sound asleep.

He awoke the next morning among the rolling hills of the East, and a little after dark arrived in New York. The morning after that he sent from his hotel to Jimmy Warfield this telegram:

"What is state of affairs? For God's sake, fight off vote as long as you can. I may bring help."

In two hours, the reply came:

"Pike arrived, and says he will vote for Carton. Takes four Republican senators with him, and chances now so nearly even that each side afraid to push for a vote. Carton saved for present, but for future our hopes in you."

"What a loyal fellow he is to his friends!" was Guthrie's unspoken comment. "He doesn't know

why I'm here, but he takes my word for it that I'm to make a find."

His next step was to find the address of Purvis & Eaton in the city directory, and then he went down to the number given in Nassau Street, near Wall. Guthrie had been in New York before, but the roar and rush of the mighty down-town canyons called streets almost stunned him, coming now from the silence and peace of the mountains. However, his thoughts lingered little on these phases; he was too intent on his plan of campaign, and his object was to spy out the country of the one whom he considered the enemy.

The office of the great financiers indicated massiveness and simplicity. It was on the second floor of a white stone building of severe architecture, and occupied, so Guthrie reckoned, at least a dozen rooms. The men who passed in or out wore silk hats and frock coats, and were mostly of full flesh. Everything bore the appearance of wealth and importance.

Satisfied for the present with this external inspection, Guthrie returned to his hotel, which he had purposely chosen in the down-town district in order that he might always be near to his field of battle. There he bought all the morning papers and looked carefully over their financial columns, but he found nowhere a quotation of "United" bonds or stock, preferred or common. He had not really expected to find such quotations, as the company was yet without a charter, but he was not willing to neglect any possible source of information. Then he went forth upon a second expedition.

It was his purpose now to buy a share of "United" stock, or at least to make an offer for it, if there was such a thing in the market, and he decided to attempt

the purchase as close as possible to the offices of Purvis & Eaton. He had noticed brokers' signs on doors in the same building, and he entered one on the third floor. He gave his name and State, and then mentioned the stock that he wished to buy. The broker looked at him with some curiosity.

"There is no such stock in the market," he said.

"I was told that Messrs. Purvis & Eaton, the bankers in this building, were financing the company," said Guthrie boldly, surmising that this assertion would act as a leading question.

"I recall it," said the broker meditatively, "and if I mistake not, Purvis & Eaton were to bond and stock the scheme. But I haven't heard anything of it recently; I suppose it's fallen through; lots of these Western and Southern enterprises do, you know."

Guthrie thanked him, and went out, his heart beating happily. The broker's words were vague, but they confirmed—if a conviction can be confirmed—the belief that he had formed when Senator Pike's chance words at Briarton gave to him the name of Purvis & Eaton. He walked again by their offices, and looked up at the massive sign, "Purvis & Eaton, Bankers, New York, Paris, and London," and watched the portly, silk-hatted, and frock-coated men go in and out. "I shall get at you yet," he said to himself, confidently and triumphantly.

He devoted all the rest of the day to inquiries concerning Purvis & Eaton, bankers. He went to the galleries of the Stock Exchange, asking chance questions there, and at last he introduced himself to the financial editors of the great newspapers, and sought information from them.

Sometimes he was rebuffed, and sometimes his questions were answered; but Guthrie noticed in all the replies a certain caution and reserve, as if his informants were not telling quite all they knew. His keen instinct at once told him the cause: this firm, despite its great business and its dignified connections, had one little shady corner. Purvis & Eaton, he learned, operated all over the world, and there were five partners, three Americans, an Englishman, and a German.

This was the limit of his day's work, and after dark he went to his hotel and sent to Jimmy Warfield this brief telegram: "How are things?" In an hour came the briefer reply: "*Status quo.*" Guthrie had a great feeling of satisfaction, and in the night he walked across the Brooklyn Bridge, looking down upon the scene of the world's greatest activity, all dark and quiet now. It was his conclusion that the darkness hid alike much that was good and much that was bad.

The next day, he pursued the same line of inquiry, trying to find exactly what that shady corner in the business of Purvis & Eaton covered. He noticed in the most solid of the morning papers a small advertisement by the firm, stating that they were dealers in State and city bonds, and could furnish good investments. He found later that they made a specialty of the West and the South, and at last, in his pursuit of shares of the United Electric, Gas, Power, Light, and Heating Company, he came to one broker, who, in anger, told just what he wanted to know.

"That," he exclaimed, "is one of Charlie Warren's schemes!"

Warren, as Guthrie had ascertained, was the young-

est partner in the firm of Purvis & Eaton. But he said nothing, waiting for the broker, who, he judged, had got the worst of some transaction with Warren, to continue, as he seemed willing to do.

"I don't know what has come of it," continued the broker, "but, if it goes through, as likely it will, the bonds and stock of the company will be worth a lot of money."

"But our city is hardly large enough to pay big dividends on rival street railway, electric light, heating, and gas companies," said Guthrie mildly.

The broker looked at Guthrie with rather an amused glance, and contracted his left eyelid just a trifle, so much as to say: "Well, you are a green one."

"Do you take Charlie Warren for a fool?" he asked.

"I do not know anything about him."

"So it seems. Charlie Warren and the firm of Purvis & Eaton do not dream of running a street railway, an electric light, or any other kind of a company. They have a better use for their time and money than that."

"Then what do they want?"

"Why, to sell out to the old companies the moment they get their charter. It's as plain as the nose on your face, and as simple as A, B, C. It can be done, too, right along, if you are powerful enough and unscrupulous enough to do it. You see, all these Western and Southern States are aflame against corporations and monopolies, and they are honest in it, too, but their anger can be used for other purposes. Just find a large city where a company has had an exclusive public franchise of any kind, then you go up to the

Legislature with an application for a franchise for a new and rival corporation to break the power of the old—all in the people's interest, of course—and, nine times out of ten, it will go through if pushed well."

"And then?"

"And then—after a while, when the noise about it has died out, the new company sells out to the old—compels it to buy, so to speak—sort of legal blackmail, and there you are; the old company still has its monopoly, the new company has its price, and the public its experience. Young man, there are more ways than one in this world to whip the devil around the stump!"

"I see," said Guthrie, and thanking the man, he went out. "They say that 'hell hath no fury like a woman scorned,'" he murmured to himself, "but I fancy that one broker worsted in a trade by another is just about as bad."

This concluded another day's work, and again, at nightfall, Guthrie telegraphed an inquiry to Jimmy Warfield, and back came the answer, "*status quo*."

Then Guthrie sent another message which read: "Keep it up; things here beginning to come our way."

Jimmy Warfield received this second telegram a little before midnight, and his face glowed as he read it. Then he took it to Carton, who was still awake, gloomily gazing out of the window. "I don't know what it means," said Warfield, "but Billy Guthrie never would send a telegram like that unless he had something up his sleeve."

"He certainly would not," said Carton, his face lighting up with hope.

Guthrie now prepared himself for the boldest stroke of all—one that he would not have tried, had he not

been absolutely sure of his ground. He went the next morning to the office of Purvis & Eaton, and sent his correspondent's card to the great Mr. Warren, to be informed a few minutes later by the supercilious messenger that Mr. Warren was too busy to see any newspaper representative.

Guthrie was not disconcerted. He understood the important manner, and he had learned early that men really great never have an important manner.

He wrote a note to Mr. Warren, saying briefly that he expected to send to the *Times* a full account of Purvis & Eaton's interest in the Electric, Gas, Power, Light, and Heating Company's bill. He had ascertained that the bill was prepared in their office, pushed through by their lobbyist, Mr. Caius Marcellus Harlow, and that no preparation had ever been made, even to begin a plant in case of the bill's passage. The public, therefore, must infer that the new company, if it obtained a charter, merely intended to force the old ones to buy out its privileges. If Messrs. Purvis & Eaton cared to say anything, he would be glad to annex it to his account.

"Take this to Mr. Warren," said Guthrie to the messenger.

The boy hesitated, but Guthrie's stern gaze cowed him, and he disappeared within the doors. Guthrie had no doubt of the result. He knew how, in gambling language, to meet a bluff with a bluff, and he waited, at ease. The messenger was a much longer time than before in returning. Finally, he came with word that the partners would see the visitor, and Guthrie followed him through offices in which many clerks toiled at great ledgers, and through one door he caught a glimpse

of a boy marking quotations on a high blackboard. Then the messenger opened another door, and, with the words, "the partners will see you here, sir," left him.

Guthrie stepped into the private office of Messrs. Purvis & Eaton, and closed the door behind him. Four of the partners were present, two of the Americans, the Englishman, and the German. Three of them were men of fifty or more, heavy, portly, side-whiskered, and dressed in black. But the fourth, who was not over forty-five, was thin, smoothly shaven, and wore a gray sack suit. Guthrie knew instinctively that this was Mr. Warren.

No one asked him to be seated, and, of his own accord, he took a chair. Then he glanced coolly around the room, which was darkly carpeted, had mahogany chairs on the floor and large portraits of the five partners on the wall. As none of the partners yet spoke, evidently waiting for him to do so, he continued his survey of the room, and also remained silent.

Guthrie noticed that the four men were gazing at him in a haughty and reproving manner, but he was not awed. The element of respect, even deference, was not lacking in his composition. He valued money, and he thought it a silly affectation to pretend to despise it; but the money-king never appealed to him as a great man. Once a bank cashier in a moment of condescension had said to him: "You look like a grave and sensible young man, Mr. Guthrie, and, by application, you may in time become a cashier as I am," but Guthrie was not flattered. He had been taught to look toward other ideals. To him, the great men were the great statesmen, and writers, and soldiers, and artists,

and ministers. Lincoln and Thackeray were infinitely more inspiring names to him than Rothschild or Rockefeller. It was, therefore, with perfect calmness that he faced the four partners, who, he knew perfectly well, would try to browbeat him and make him feel as if he were a presumptuous intruder.

The youngest of them held Guthrie's card in his hand, and twirled it rather contemptuously. Guthrie noticed the action, and glanced indifferently out of the window.

"This is an extraordinary, I may say, an impertinent note that you have sent us!" at last said the senior and plumpest partner, Mr. Purvis.

"It did not impress me as being impertinent," replied Guthrie coolly. "At any rate, your Mr. Warren made it necessary; I sent in my card at first with no note at all."

"This is a threat," continued the senior partner, the dull red flushing into his cheeks. "You tell us that you are going to publish an article defaming one of the largest and most reputable banking firms in New York City. It is blackmail, it is——"

"Kindly stop where you are," said Guthrie, "you make nothing by calling me names. I stated facts in that note. I have ascertained beyond a doubt that you originated and pushed the bill for the 'United.' You are at the back of the fight against Mr. Carton, the Speaker of the House in our State, because he divined the purpose of this bill, and, through his power as Speaker, has long prevented its passage. You are the cause of his present impeachment. He is my friend, and I shall serve both him and the cause of justice."

Mr. Purvis was about to speak, evidently with anger, but the junior partner, Mr. Warren, raised his hand.

"May I ask, Mr. Guthrie," he said, smoothly, glancing at the card when he uttered the name, as if his memory did not serve in so slight a matter, "where you have learned all this very interesting romance?"

"You mean history, not romance; by many inquiries among bankers, brokers, financial writers, and others. I am willing to tell you also that, in anticipation of the passage of the bill, you gave the contract for printing the stock and bond certificates to the American Printing Company, 24½ Nassau Street, and their work, very neatly and handsomely done, is now ready for delivery."

The junior partner bit his lip, but in a moment recovered his suavity.

"Very interesting," he said, "and suppose, for the sake of argument, we should grant its truth, what then? So far, we are entirely within our rights. It is our business to place stocks and bonds. One of our functions is that of a sales-agent."

"Undoubtedly."

"What then becomes of your second charge that it is our purpose, and has been our purpose from the first, to compel the old companies to buy us out. That is a very difficult thing to prove, and your newspaper will be liable in heavy damages."

"The charge stands. I shall make it, and take all chances. I know morally that it is true, and I can pile up enough evidence to convince anybody. And I tell you, too, for your information that you could not possibly get a jury in my State, where such a case would have to be tried, to give a verdict in this connection against the *Times* and in favour of a distant corporation like yours."

"Then, why have you come here at all?"

"To take your statement, if you care to give it. We are fair; we do not wish to publish one side and suppress the other."

Here Mr. Purvis, who had been heaving and flushing in silence, broke all bounds.

"Get out, you impudent young rascal! How dare you come here and talk in this manner to us!" he cried.

"I may be impudent, and I am glad to be young, but I am not a financial pirate; I don't try to make money by plundering others."

The suave Mr. Warren intervened.

"Mr. Guthrie has shown himself very enterprising," he said, "but I cannot understand why he wishes to put such motives into a legitimate business transaction. Our purpose is entirely within the law—both legal and moral—but, at the same time, we do not care to have the name of an old and honoured firm showered with innuendo in the public prints. Will nothing induce you to stop the sending of this despatch, Mr. Guthrie?"

"Nothing! Do you care to make any statement that I can publish with it?"

"None whatever."

"Then, we are wasting each other's time. Good day."

"Good day."

Guthrie put on his hat, and went out, followed by the frowning glances of the partners. In the hall, he rang the bell for the elevator, and, when it came, a single passenger stepped from it—a middle-aged man, with gray hair carefully brushed back from his temples, and a smoothly shaven, wary face.

It was Caius Marcellus Harlow.

He started, and Guthrie, for the first time in his life, saw him show surprise.

"I am happy to see you, Mr. Harlow," he said—and he told the truth. "I have just come from an interview with your employers."

"Ah!"

"And they are not happy."

"No?"

"No, they are not. Mr. Harlow, I know the whole story; it will appear in the *Times* in the morning."

Caius Marcellus Harlow bent upon him a curious look; it was not anger nor even disappointment; there was in it a trace of admiration.

"Mr. Guthrie," he said, "you win," and bowing he passed on toward the office of Purvis & Eaton.

Guthrie walked slowly to his hotel. Once he glanced back, and saw following him at a little distance the messenger who had shown him into the private office of Purvis & Eaton. But he did not care.

At the hotel, he sent to Jimmy Warfield once more the inquiry "how are things?" and back came the old answer, "*Status quo*." Then he sent to Warfield another despatch: "Have everything; see *Times* in the morning," and after that he wired to his home office this bulletin: "Full details of conspiracy against Carton; ten thousand words to-night; pay no attention to despatches from Purvis & Eaton. Absolutely sure of facts." Then he went to his room, cleared his table, and began to write.

There were ten thousand words to write, but Guthrie knew exactly what he wanted to say, and the sentences flowed from his pen. Although he had not the shadow of a doubt as to the object of Purvis & Eaton, he would

not charge them directly with selling out, but the fact that the scheme was born in their office—and of that he had plenty of proof—left an implication so clear that the public could never mistake it. The people, not the *Times*, would say that the purpose of Purvis & Eaton was to sell out, and Guthrie knew that no number of denials could shake a belief obviously so well-founded. As for the threat of a great libel suit, he had not the slightest fear of it; he knew that it would never go further than a menace.

He found the writing easy; the facts marshalled themselves in order, and he felt so deeply about Carton that he drew in vivid lines the picture of a faithful public servant whom designing people sought to ruin because they could not shake his policy.

He had been writing two hours when there came a knock at the door, and Guthrie, without laying down his pencil, called "Come in!" The door was opened, and Mr. Warren and Mr. Harlow entered. Both were suave and smiling though not overdoing it, and they sat down as guests who, if they were not expected, were at least not unwelcome.

"Writing I see," said Mr. Harlow lightly as if he were passing the time of day.

"Yes," replied Guthrie briefly, "the account of which I told Mr. Warren this morning."

"I have a little to add to our conversation then," said Mr. Warren; "I did not wish to speak of it before my partners, who, I tell you in confidence, are absorbed in issues, leaving details to me."

Guthrie put down his pencil, and gazed intently at Mr. Warren, who flushed and paused a few moments.

"We are entirely innocent in this matter," continued

the junior partner presently, "but an article such as you are writing may do us a great deal of harm. A libel once disseminated can never be thoroughly corrected. We also recognise the fact that, even with a just cause, it is practically impossible for us to obtain a verdict against the *Times*, before a partisan jury devoted to home interests and influenced against foreign corporations by the public prints."

"Well?" said Guthrie, inquiringly.

Mr. Warren hesitated again, the tint in his cheeks deepened, and he glanced at his ally, Mr. Harlow.

"I merely wish to tell you," he said, "that, in a vault in a safe deposit company not more than a quarter of a mile from here, there is a sealed envelope containing the sum of fifty thousand dollars. The key to that vault could be left——"

Guthrie rose at once, his face quite gray.

"Mr. Warren," he exclaimed, "leave my room at once! And as for you, Mr. Harlow, I am astonished that you should have come here with this man on such an errand."

Mr. Harlow never flinched.

"Mr. Guthrie," he said quietly, "a statement is due both to you and to myself. Knowing you as I do, I opposed this visit and its purpose, but Mr. Warren is my employer. He wished to take this last chance because we should have had a vote to-morrow, and the impeachment of Carton would have passed the Senate by a majority of two. That I know positively, and, after it, our bill would have passed with a rush. Good day."

"Good day," said Guthrie as they went out. Then he resumed his writing.

CHAPTER XIV

GUTHRIE'S DESPATCH

THE next morning was full of vivid suspense at the little capital one thousand miles away. The great snow was gone, and the south wind still blew. Tender shoots of young grass were appearing in sheltered nooks on the hillsides. Spring was not far away.

All steps tended toward the senate-chamber. The evidence was all in, most of the speeches had been made, and in the afternoon at three o'clock, the time already being set, the Senate would come to a vote on the great Carton case which for weeks had rent the State into factions, and which had aroused new passions in a commonwealth already taking its politics very seriously. Some of the leaders may have known in advance how the vote would stand, but the public did not, and the uncertainty of the result lent an added lustre to a case already possessing so many vital claims to popular interest.

The House held a very brief session, not more than half an hour long, and then the members went in to the Senate to listen to the close of the famous case. Jimmy Warfield was with the crowd, but he was constantly turning in his mind a great secret—a secret it was, too, to himself as well as to others and he could not rest. He read Guthrie's message over and over again, and he had the utmost confidence in Guthrie. He told himself

that he could never doubt his friend's promise, but as the time drew near he was a prey to nervous apprehension. He hired a boy to wait at the railroad station, and to hurry to him as quickly as possible when the time came. Then he compelled himself to take a seat in the senate-chamber beside a Senator who was an avowed Carton adherent. Extra chairs had been brought in, and, to the members of the House, seats on the floor of the Senate were courteously given.

The galleries were crowded, largely with ladies, beginning to show touches of spring colours now in their costumes, their faces bright and eager. Nearly all of them were in sympathy with Carton. Warfield saw in one group Mrs. Hastings, Mrs. Dennison, the Pelhams and the Ransomes. Mary Pelham's face was white and cold, and there was the least touch of a dark ring, under her eyes. Warfield knew how she suffered, and he knew, too, that, if she had followed her feelings, she would have stayed away that day, but her pride would not let her.

Back of the ladies were the officials of the Government packed in a dense mass, and back of these were other curious spectators and the floating population. Suddenly a thrill showing itself in a curious flutter ran through the whole assemblage; Carton was coming in. "Just like him," thought Warfield; "he was sure to wait until everybody was here, and then enter in defiance of all his enemies."

Carton's face was stern and high, and, taking a seat near the dais of the Lieutenant-Governor, he looked up and bowed to three or four friends in the balconies. There was no effusive demonstration of indifference, but his bearing was so quietly firm and defiant that a murmur of applause started in the balconies, and

began to rise, but the Lieutenant-Governor sternly checked it.

The face of the Lieutenant-Governor was inscrutable; if he knew how the vote was going, he made no sign; if it should be a tie, he must cast the deciding ballot, but he had presided throughout the long and bitter trial with an absolute impartiality and justice that had now the applause of the whole State, Carton and anti-Carton.

Senator Cobb sat at one of the front desks, his face quite stern, and it was known that he would vote against Carton. He had opposed to the uttermost the calling of the vote—in fact, he blocked it until the return of Mr. Pike; but, that duty done, he resumed his place with the anti-Carton forces. It had been shown that the Speaker had referred the bill for the “United” to a hostile committee purposely chosen by himself; that, at his suggestion, the committee had delayed the report for weeks; that all efforts of the friends of the bill to get it before the House had failed for a long time because he would not recognise a member who arose to make such a motion, recognising somebody else instead. By such tactics, he had fought off a measure that was obviously, so many said, in the interest of the public and against monopoly.

Senator Cobb did not believe that Carton had profited financially by the use of such tactics, but he did believe him to be the indirect agent of the “money power,” because he was allied with that power by tastes and sympathy. But Mr. Pursley, sitting only a few chairs away, had stated openly and many times his belief that Carton’s pockets were lined with ill-gotten gains. Now Mr. Pursley’s face was shining with triumph. Carton, whom he hated for his superiority and who had insulted him, was about to go down in disgrace, and he, Mr.

Pursley, would appear as the tribune of the people. Near Mr. Pursley sat the Honourable Henry Clay Warner, the member of Congress for Guthrie's own district, the famous old Fourth. He too claimed to be a tribune of the people, and he had come on from Washington to witness the conclusion of the great trial, and incidentally to shed opinion on the duties of a public man. He was not less rubicund than Mr. Pursley, and his heavy figure sprawled awkwardly in his chair.

Three chairs farther on was Mr. Pike. He had taken little part in the great debate, but his short and few sentences had been incisive. He had called attention to Carton's lofty character as attested by numerous proofs, and he thought that the Speaker of the House had a right to hold back the bill by all means in his power if he believed it to be introduced for corrupt purposes. For the other side, he had little severe criticism; to them he too ascribed honest opinions. Men said that the character of the mountain Senator had become singularly mellowed.

There was one speech yet to be made for the prosecution by a senator who dealt much in fierce invectives, and he began shortly after the entrance of the members from the House. He had much to say about the liberties of freemen and the corrupting influence of the money power working through insidious agents. Jimmy Warfield paid little attention to what he was saying, but, being restless went into the lobby and joined the group about the Governor's wife. He sat down by Clarice, and she noticed his face with an indirect but keen glance.

"You look cheerful, Mr. Warfield, as if you expected something," she said. "What do you think will be the result of the vote?"

"Carton's enemies claim that it will expel him," replied Warfield, in so low a tone that Mary Pelham could not hear.

"What a shame! I do not believe that Mr. Carton ever did a dishonourable thing!"

"Neither do I," said Jimmy emphatically.

"If the vote is to go against him, how can you see any cause for cheerfulness, Mr. Warfield?"

"While's there's life, there's hope," quoted Warfield.

He excused himself in a moment, and went back to his seat on the floor. The speaker for the prosecution was making points, and, despite the presiding officer's gavel, applause arose now and then from the anti-Carton crowd.

Jimmy Warfield, notwithstanding his light manner, was a man of great strength of mind, but he found it hard to control his impatience. He moved in his seat; he looked at his watch, and he listened eagerly for something that he did not hear. The prosecuting senator soared on and on, pouring out his philippic. Carton in his seat near the lieutenant-governor's dais never stirred, and the calm expression of his face did not change.

A faint note of a whistle from the hills to the west of the Capitol came to the listening ear of Jimmy Warfield, and he stirred again in his seat. The whistle was swiftly followed by the rumble and roar of the arriving train, and then in a few moments by another rumble and roar, as it disappeared in the east.

Jimmy did not move now. He listened, but he did not hear a word of the senator who was on the rising side of a period. He turned in his wheeled chair pres-

ently, and gazed at the door, and his face was illumined in a most wonderful manner when he saw a little ragged boy appear at the entrance of the senate-chamber, and hand to a page a small package in a paper wrapper. The page tiptoed down the aisle, and gave the package to Warfield.

Warfield fingered the bundle nervously. He knew perfectly well that it contained his copy of the morning's issue of the *Times*, delivered to him a little ahead of the others. But what would the *Times* contain?

He tore off the wrapper, and dropped it on the floor; then he opened the newspaper, and swept the first page with a comprehensive glance. Then Jimmy Warfield uttered a low cry of exultation that, low as it was, startled the Senate, stopped the orator, and drew all eyes to him.

But Jimmy Warfield was not abashed. Rising to his feet, the outspread paper with its great, black headlines, and its columns and columns of a leaded despatch spreading over the first page and beyond, held firmly in his hand, he thus addressed the Senate:

"Gentlemen, I am not a member of this body, and I am present upon the floor by courtesy; but something of the greatest importance bearing directly upon the case before you has just come into my hands. I, therefore, request the gentleman from Warner County to bring it to the attention of the Senate."

He handed the *Times* to Senator Cobb, who glanced over the first page. As he did so, Warfield saw a startled look appear on his face. But in a moment Senator Cobb rose to his feet, and said:

"Fellow senators, Mr. Warfield has given into my hand a document that changes the whole aspect of this

case. I ask that the clerk of the Senate read it aloud at once."

An indescribable thrill ran through the lobbies as the Senator spoke. There was a hum, a murmur, the noise of many people moving, and then the dead silence of expectation. Jimmy Warfield saw the deep red flush come into Mary Pelham's cheeks, and then retreat, leaving them marble-white. Mr. Pursley, too, turned white, but for another reason. Warfield saw a single questioning look appear in the eye of Carton, and then the face of the Speaker became as stern and expressionless as ever.

"Read! Read!" cried the senators, and the paper was hurriedly taken by a page to the clerk's desk.

The clerk of the Senate was a big man with a big voice, and, in the attentive silence, he read first the headlines, his deep bass notes filling all the room:

SPEAKER CARTON INNOCENT!

THE GREAT CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIM UNEARTHED!

ITS HEAD AND HEART FOUND IN A BANKER'S OFFICE
IN NEW YORK CITY

ALL THE PLANS OF THE NEW COMPANY TO FORCE THE
OLD OVER TO BUY IT OUT LAID BARE

CARTON WAS TO BE BROKEN ON THE WHEEL BECAUSE
HE WAS THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO THE
REAPING OF FRAUDULENT PROFITS

THE CORRESPONDENT OF THE TIMES SEES PURVIS &
EATON, THE NEW YORK BANKERS WHO WERE
FINANCING THE SCHEME

The Clerk paused for a moment after reading the head-lines.

"By Jove, that head-liner understood his business!" murmured Jimmy Warfield in devout thankfulness. Then there came a sudden burst of applause like the crackle of guns. Carton's face turned red; Warfield saw his lips moving, and he knew how deep and intense was the Speaker's relief. The presiding officer was beating with his gavel for order, and in a few moments it was restored.

"Continue the reading, Mr. Clerk," said the Lieutenant-Governor.

Then the Clerk read in his full, clear voice that slurred no word. Guthrie's account began at the beginning. It described the office of Messrs. Purvis & Eaton, its position in New York, and the character of the business that the firm did. He told how they employed skilled lobbyists in distant western and southern states—especially in those where the feeling against corporations ran the highest—and how they had prepared the bill for the "United." He told of the printing of the stocks and bonds by the order of Messrs. Purvis & Eaton; how they had paid lobbyists at the capital to work for it, and the total absence of any preparations to erect plants in case the bill should become a law. Everything was laid bare, every detail was clear; the listening people involuntarily pictured to themselves how the plot was formed in the office of the bankers, the vision of great profits, the employment of shrewd agents, the arousing of the Legislature and the people by the cry of "Down with the monopolies!" and the purchase, perhaps, of a few corrupt members to work night and day for the bill—

here eyes, as if by a common impulse were bent upon Mr. Pursley, and he turned white again—then the opposition of the powerful Speaker, followed by the plan of the conspirators to break and ruin him.

The Clerk read on in his clear, full voice, but long before he was half-way through there were a hundred more copies of the *Times* inside the senate-chamber, and many people were quietly reading for themselves. Guthrie's name in full was signed to the despatch, and people began to whisper to each other: "He did it alone!" "What a debt Carton owes to him!" "And what a debt the State owes him, too!" But the look upon Mary Pelham's face was one that Clarice will always remember; she seemed suddenly to be released from some great strain like unto the fear of death. A devout thankfulness shone in her eyes, and the countenance, ordinarily so cold and fixed, smiled as a young girl's should. Once her eyes and those of Carton met, and a single swift lightning glance that only Jimmy Warfield saw passed between them; it told of mountains that had been rolled away; but after that the face of each became cold.

The reading went on, and the crowd listened, absorbed. Mr. Pursley, by and by, quietly left the senate-chamber. In the lobbies, they still whispered Guthrie's name admiringly, but Mrs. Ransome looked scornful. "I do not see what is so wonderful in it!" she said. "Anybody could have gone to New York, and could have done the same thing."

Then Lucy Hastings turned, fire in her eyes.

"But nobody else went," she said shortly.

Mrs. Ransome did not pursue the subject. It was not her purpose to arouse antagonisms.

Jimmy Warfield presently went over to Carton, and whispered:

"Phil, you owe Billy Guthrie a debt you can never pay!"

"I know it, Jimmy."

"It was a close shave; three hours more, and they would have taken a vote expelling you by a majority of two—my figures are right—and, no matter if you had been proved innocent later on, that vote of expulsion would have ruined you forever."

"I know it, Jimmy, and to tell you the truth, I expected to be expelled."

Again the Senate relapsed into intense silence, save for the deep voice of the Clerk, and now and then a sigh of relief that ran through the lobbies. Suddenly, the people discovered that their sympathies were with Carton. How handsome and heroic he looked! How little he had complained! And nothing thrills the popular heart more than a youth on the edge of conviction suddenly found innocent. Even old General Pelham melted, and, leaning over his daughter, he whispered, "Mary, I thank God for this day!" She said nothing, but put her hand for a moment in her mother's.

The Clerk finished at last, and the case lay plain before them all. There was a moment of hesitation, and then Senator Cobb rose to his feet again, his face full of purpose.

"Fellow senators," he said, "the document that has just been read to us is not a legal exhibit in this case. Nevertheless, it is testimony of the most vital and compelling nature. All of us know the writer of that article, and all of us know his high character, his absolute

truthfulness and honesty. Until I heard the reading of the despatch, I was convinced that Mr. Carton had improperly used his office as Speaker of the House, and, therefore, deserved impeachment; now I know that he did what he did for the public good, and that he is a hero and almost a martyr. I shall vote for him, and I ask that the vote on the impeachment proceedings be taken at once."

"I second the motion," exclaimed Senator Pike.

"All who are in favour of taking the vote now will please say 'Aye,'" said the Lieutenant-Governor.

There was a roar of "Ayes!"

"All who are against it say 'No.'"

There was not a "no."

"This is hurrying things with a vengeance," murmured Jimmy Warfield, but he had no complaint to make.

"Oh! why are they going to take a vote now?" exclaimed Clarice. "It seems so unjust after Mr. Guthrie has cleared Mr. Carton!"

"Hush!" said Lucy Hastings. "It is right! You will see."

"Call the roll, Mr. Clerk," said the Lieutenant-Governor, and the Clerk began to call it, name by name, the presiding officer having put the question whether or not the defendant was guilty.

The first senator voted "no," loudly and clearly, and there was a murmur of applause, quickly checked by the pounding of the gavel. But, as the "noes" still came in an unbroken line, the applause rose again, and the gavel could not suppress it. It swelled into a roar, and, when the name of the last senator was called, every one had voted "not guilty." Then, in one final burst

the applause died away, and the Lieutenant-Governor rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen of the Senate," he said, "you have voted unanimously for the acquittal of the defendant, the Speaker of the House, and never was there a more righteous verdict. Mr. Carton, I congratulate you."

It is on record that the Senate of the State once adjourned without a motion to that effect being made, and this was the day. Such a proceeding was irregular and unconstitutional, but nobody ever questioned it, because the Lieutenant-Governor stepped down from his dais to congratulate the Speaker, and the great assemblage rising, as if by one impulse, followed the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Carton found himself the centre of a crowd that showered praises upon him and shook his hand until he lost his cold reserve and dignity, and became embarrassed. But Jimmy Warfield, standing in an aisle with Clarice Ransome, and looking on said in a low voice,

"I am glad through and through, Miss Ransome, but, after all, this final scene is like an oft-quoted one; it is the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out."

"What do you mean, Mr. Warfield?" she asked.

"It's Guthrie's achievement, and not Carton's: he should be here."

"Yes, it is his," she said proudly, and then she added the question: "Is he to get no credit?"

"Credit, yes; substantial reward, none that I know. Carton would pay him if he could, but he cannot."

Her heart was full of indignant rebellion. It seemed to her that Guthrie was always serving others and never

doing anything for himself. Even with the climax of his great achievement at hand, and the applauding crowd about the acquitted, he was away, and Carton held the centre of the stage. It had been the same way in another great case: he had saved Senator Pike from himself, off there in the mountains, but the Senator had returned alone and received the plaudits, while Guthrie was elsewhere.

It seemed to her a great injustice, but she said nothing, and, when the crowd thinned somewhat, she too gave him her sincere congratulations. If she had felt any little bitterness against Carton for being the chief figure, it disappeared wholly when she saw Mary Pelham's face.

At last everybody was gone, save those who constituted the almost family group known as "the Governor's set." By and by, they too went, laughing and talking joyously, Carton in the centre. Clarice alone was silent. Somehow she felt that much was missing, but again she was afraid to analyse her own feelings.

It was several weeks later, and Guthrie and Clarice drove once more along the river road. Spring was at hand, all the circle of hills about the capital glowed in tender green, and the south wind called to the open.

Guthrie had returned to the capital very quietly two or three days after the arrival of the *Times* containing his great news. He came in at midnight, and appeared modestly the next morning at his accustomed desk. There was sudden applause in the House that made him blush in embarrassment, and, after the reception, the members compelled him to be the central figure at a sort of informal levee; but he was glad to

escape from it all, and did so as soon as he could without being rude.

Carton said nothing then, but afterward, when they were alone, he gave Guthrie the sincere hand-clasp that tells of a friendship never to be destroyed, and almost repeated Jimmy Warfield's words, "Billy, I owe you more than I can ever pay you!" "Oh, nonsense, Carton!" said Guthrie, "It was news that I was after." But Carton knew better.

The Speaker had come out of his ordeal with increased prestige. He was at once a hero and a martyr, and it gave him a glamour that endeared him to the people. The nomination for Congress in his district, one of the most famous in the State, was now offered to him without opposition, and, as it was heavily Democratic, he was as good as elected, although the election was more than six months away. Jimmy Warfield, whose legislative district belonged to him in fee simple, as the people jokingly but truly said, would succeed Carton in the next Legislature as Speaker of the House. Senator Pike's action, and the talk about it in the press, had attracted the attention of the Republican president, who was about to appoint him to the important office of Pension Commissioner for the State. The Governor's staunch support of Carton, at a time when such support was unpopular, had made him—already strong—yet stronger with the people, and it was obvious that a great career lay before him.

Everybody but Guthrie was receiving rewards, and now Clarice, as she drove with him on the river road, felt bitterness for his sake. He had done it all; it was his mind and courage that had won all these triumphs, and the one who alone had earned the great reward

remained unpaid. But she could not see that Guthrie was conscious of it. He took it as a matter of course, and was now looking forward to new work in his chosen profession. The Legislature would adjourn in a few days, and he would immediately plunge into a hot congressional fight in his home city, where the Honourable Henry Clay Warner was seeking renomination, with powerful forces opposing him.

Guthrie pointed with his whip to some lumber rafts on the river, now swollen and yellow with the floods from the mountains.

"Do you remember that time in the winter when we saw Senator Pike board one of those rafts?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! I could not forget it; his actions and those of the other men seemed so strange."

"Those men belonged to the feudists. I did not know it then, but at that time the affairs of the Pikes and the Dilgers were coming to a head. We had a despatch yesterday from Briarton saying that Pete Dilger was duly hanged the day before, by law, in the presence of ten thousand people, gathered from all parts of the mountains. I hope that it will be a good example, because, if ever a man deserved hanging, it was he, and it may induce the mountaineers hereafter to let the law takes its course, and not resort to personal revenge. At least, it may help."

"That must have been an alarming experience of yours in the mountains," she said.

"I did not have time to think of fear," he replied, "but it was certainly interesting. I look back upon it as very vivid, and, when I had lived a while with those mountaineers, I really liked them. Their faults are those of circumstances and environment."

"I suppose so," she said.

Guthrie spoke presently of Carton and Mary Pelham.

"They love each other, and they ought to admit it now," he said. "I wish them happiness; they would make a fine couple."

"Yes," she said, "it should be arranged, though there is yet constraint. General Pelham would withdraw his objections; Mrs. Pelham always favoured Mr. Carton; Mary, too, was confident of his innocence, and the coldness between them arose because he would not see that she loved him still, and believed in him as much as ever, despite all the things that were said against him, and despite appearances. That is what hurt her."

"Well, they are over the roughest places now," said Guthrie joyously, "and, after all, though it is a bitter experience, it will help Carton politically. Everything has turned out so well."

"Yes," she said boldly, "for Mr. Carton, and Mr. Warfield, and Mr. Pike, but it was you that did it; it was you, Mr. Guthrie, who saved them all, and what do you get?"

"Come now, you are making sport of me!" he said seriously. "My part was mere chance; I was after news, you know."

"But what reward do you get?" she persisted.

"All that I am entitled to, I suppose. I have another most interesting campaign just ahead. I enjoy these political fights—they whip one's blood like a spring wind. You've seen Warner here, the Honourable Henry Clay Warner, the member in the Lower House of Congress from my district, the Fourth—the heavy, red-faced man. He has proved to be a rank demagogue, and dissipated to boot. He gave good promise

once; I went with him for the *Times* through his first campaign, two years ago, and we helped him a lot; we thought that he would be a credit to the old Fourth, but he has turned out badly; now he wants a renomination, and he has back of him a crowd to which his demagoguery appeals; there are two other Democratic candidates in the field, and it looks like a bitter factional fight, ending, maybe, in a Republican triumph."

"And they expect you to help in it politically, besides describing this campaign?" she said.

"I may have a little influence with Warner," he replied with a smile. Then he added, "You, too, are going back to the city now, are you not?"

"Yes, I shall go when the Legislature adjourns; mother returned two weeks ago, and she wanted me to go with her, but I preferred to stay until the end. Lucy Hastings and Mary Pelham both will visit me in the city in a few weeks."

"And you will have another visitor," said Guthrie. "The count who is coming to claim you—it is no secret here; Mrs. Ransome often spoke of it, or I should not allude to it now. This country does not like to lose you."

He spoke quietly, but there was a tone in his voice that she had never heard before; it thrilled her, and she turned her face away to hide the red that flushed it.

"Yes," she replied, "I am engaged to be married to Raoul d'Estournelle—that is no news to you—and he said last year that he would come in the spring."

Her face was still turned away. She was gazing absently over the far hills, and she did not know that Guthrie was looking at her, his expression one of mingled sadness and admiration. He was thinking

that, if there were not so many "ifs" in the way—if she had not met d'Estournelle, if she had not become engaged to him, if she were not a rich man's daughter, if he, William Guthrie, were not poor with the prospect of remaining poor—then he, too, might have tempted his fortune—and lost; as it was, he must lose before the battle.

He struck the horses impatiently, and they trotted swiftly along the white road. It was a picturesque drive, but never had it seemed finer to Guthrie than on that day. The green of spring was everywhere, and a haze like that of Indian summer was over the hills. Neither spoke until the capital was four or five miles farther behind them.

"I suppose that in a year or so you will leave America, to stay?" said Guthrie at last.

"I do not know, but if I do, this country nevertheless will always be my own. Oh, I hate to leave it! I am just learning to love it as it should be loved!"

She spoke with a sort of angry pathos, and Guthrie looked around, surprised at the new note in her voice. He seemed to draw from it a singular kind of courage, and, throughout the rest of the drive, he was gayer and brighter in manner than Clarice had ever known him to be before.

CHAPTER XV

TEMPTATION

It was said by many in the capital in the remaining days of the session that Guthrie seemed to feel no elation over his remarkable victory with which the whole State was ringing, and these critics were not lacking in acuteness, for they were right. After the first flush of his triumph was gone, he felt a double sense of incompleteness and loneliness. Carton and Mary Pelham still held aloof from each other. The Speaker had received a brilliant vindication, but he was as far as ever from the girl he loved. Guthrie knew that Carton resented her apparent lack of faith in him when he was not favoured by appearances, and, though he had been able to set the Speaker right in public life, he did not know how to help him in love; in that respect, his work was not finished.

His sense of loneliness—a feeling that had never come to him before, and he wondered at it—arose from his own position. He realised that he was in a way a maker of reputations for many, but not for himself. Others, and it was he who had made it possible, were having their triumphs, but he remained the same. He began to feel discontent. He moved uneasily in his environment, and he was galled by the circumstances that made him what he was. Had he subjected himself to a keen analysis, he might have found that this

chafing was due to the quiet words of a girl, spoken apparently with little intent.

It was to suppress such feelings as these that he plunged into his work with renewed zeal and energy, and his despatches gained in force and brilliancy. But his sense of mental isolation did not depart, and he tried to seclude himself, keeping away from the Governor's house, in order to weaken an attraction which he felt that he must resist. Mr. Hastings was surprised, and, meeting Guthrie in the corridors of the Capitol, he asked:

"Billy, why have you cut us all? Lucy was speaking to-day of your desertion. Have you grown so great now that you prefer lonely grandeur?"

Guthrie, embarrassed, said something about the pressure of work, but the young Governor would admit no such excuse.

"That won't do, Billy," he said, smiling. "Your great pressure here is over, and you know it, and you know that I know it. We want you. Miss Pelham is still with us, and"—here his voice lingered a moment—"and Miss Ransome, too."

Despite himself, a flush came into Guthrie's cheeks, and then, because he was conscious of it, he flushed all the more. But the observant Governor pretended not to notice, and Guthrie, thinking that he did not, was in a moment himself again.

"I thought that Miss Ransome was to return to the city in a day or two," he said, in assumed carelessness. "Is she not to marry shortly that Belgian count—or is it a Frenchman?"

"I never consider marriages of that kind sure until they occur," replied the Governor in the same careless

tone, and he added nothing to this off-hand statement, save another warm invitation to come to his house. Being a married man, the Governor knew when he had said enough about an affair of the heart to the one concerned—a virtue that men never learn until their wives teach it to them.

When the Governor went home, he sought advice from Lucy on a case that he thought important, and she was not loath to give it. She helped, too, to such purpose that the next day she appeared with her group in the lobby of the House, and they were all in raiment fresh and wonderful to see. Lucy Hastings was a beautiful woman, and so was Mary Pelham, but it was quite the verdict of the House—and it contained many men no mean judges in such matters—that Clarice Ransome was the most beautiful of the three. It was not alone the loveliness of face and figure, but it was something in the expression, its frankness, the direct gaze of the eyes, that gave to mere physical beauty the added and finer touch that was of the mind and spirit. Men, beholding her, involuntarily said to themselves: “Here is a woman whom one could trust, one who would be strongest of all in evil days, one who would cling through all things to the man she loves.”

But to-day she looked very young and slender—only a girl with a rose upon her breast, and a slight touch of sadness in her eyes. Yet it was spring. Winter was completely routed, and, from all the windows, the wonderful, tender green of the circling hills was visible. There was a breath of new roses in the air, and few noticed the touch of sadness in Clarice Ransome’s eyes.

Guthrie, looking up from his desk, thought her more lovely than ever, now that he believed she was not for

him, and had never been for him. It was a democratic country, but he was not willing to be considered a fortune-hunter, nor to seek what was promised already to another man. So he steeled his heart, turned his eyes back to his desk, and resolved not to look again at the tempting balcony. But there was a power greater than his will, and presently he glanced up once more. Then Lucy Hastings eyes caught his, and she beckoned to him so imperiously to come that he could not refuse and remain a gentleman. He folded up his notes—it was a dull day, occupied with little local bills—and walking down the aisle joined the Governor's group.

Lucy Hastings was censorious, she complained of his lack of attention, she said that she had depended upon him to help her in the dying season at the capital, and now he was failing her woefully. She said that she had missed him, but she did not say that any one else had missed him, too, and she was so adroit that Clarice Ransome herself did not suspect any hidden motive. At last, after proving to the humble Guthrie how badly he had behaved, she demanded that he go with them on a woodland excursion that she had arranged for three days later, and he did not have the courage to refuse.

Nor did she make him sit just then by Clarice Ransome, but it was to Mary Pelham that she assigned him. The dull business of the session droned on, and there was no excuse for Guthrie to go. He saw out of the corner of his eye that Clarice Ransome was looking over the floor of the House, as if she sought friends there, and, on his part, he pretended to a deep interest in Miss Pelham. Nor was this all assumption. He gave much admiration to Mary Pelham, although he thought her a little too cold and a little too haughty,

at least in manner, which was particularly unfortunate, because Carton had the same faults. But to Guthrie, from some cause, which he believed he could guess, she relaxed, and when he told her, half at her own suggestion, of the events in the mountains and New York, she listened with an interest that he knew to be vivid and real. But he shrewdly judged that this eagerness to hear was less for him than for the one on whose account the journeys had been made. Guthrie, as he talked, saw the red deepen in her cheeks and her eyes sparkle, and he felt sure that Carton still had her heart. But the old sense of helplessness returned to him. He might manage some affairs, but such as these were beyond his ken. At last, he said:

"Mr. Carton, so far as public life is concerned, will profit by his ordeal. To the people, he appears in more brilliant colours than ever, after the lifting of the unjust cloud."

"He is a fortunate man," she said.

"Perhaps, but I do not think that he is a happy one."

Guthrie, observant, saw a sudden light in her eyes, as if she had heard something that pleased her, but her tone was unchanged when she asked:

"Why? What more can he want?"

Guthrie was too wise to reply. He merely shook his head.

"I do not know," he said, "but I am sure he is unhappy. I suppose that like most of us he wants very much something that he cannot get."

Carton himself had received the imperious mandate of Lucy Hastings, conveyed in a simple gesture of her hand, and he, too, obeyed. Calling another member to the chair, he entered the lobby, and joined the little

group of ladies. He bowed courteously to Mary Pelham, and then devoted himself to Lucy Hastings and Clarice Ransome. But, in spite of themselves, in spite of Lucy Hastings' best efforts, a certain constraint settled over them all, and it was not broken until Senator Pike, as grave as ever, but with a milder light in his eyes, came to their help. His very absence of social guile, his infinite capacity for speaking of things just as they were, relieved them. Soon they were all gathered about him, and then there was a readjustment of the circle. Guthrie now found himself by the side of Clarice Ransome.

In this changed condition, Guthrie felt his old sense of uneasiness return. There was something about Clarice that always drew him on. He had ceased to doubt his feeling for her, he knew that it was love, and he was afraid of himself. To-day that little touch of sadness made her infinitely winning.

"I heard Lucy asking you to come with us Saturday," she said, "but I do not know what your answer was. I hope that you are coming, Mr. Guthrie. We feel that you have quite abandoned us since your triumphal return."

"Count on me," said Guthrie lightly, and then he added with real earnestness:

"I wish you wouldn't speak of my triumphal return. I had a little good luck, that was all, and, moreover, my return isn't triumphal."

She glanced at him, and, when she saw the genuinely despondent look upon his face, there was a little glow in her eyes. She had intimated to him by the river that he should think, not less of others, but more of himself. These words may have left their mark.

A singular spirit now animated Clarice Ransome. For the first time in her life, she played the coquette—not the heartless coquette, but the one who is in earnest, and a coquette, too, who hid all her arts from spectators. She spoke to Guthrie in an ordinary voice, but there was a tone, faint though it was, that still led him on. A great resolve was forming in her mind, and never had Guthrie found her more attractive, more brilliant. There was an elusive charm that he could not grasp or define, and, under its influence, he found all his strength melting away.

When Lucy Hastings went home, she said to her husband,

“Mr. Guthrie will come with us Saturday, and I think that he is glad to come.”

Clarice Ransome went to her room, locked the door, and took from a trunk a photograph at which she looked long and carefully. The photograph bore the name of a foreign maker in the corner, and the face was that of a young man whose mustache curled beautifully. Then she shut her eyes, and her mind produced another face that was wholly different, and she seemed to like it, because she smiled. Then she opened her eyes again, and looked at the photograph with a distinct aversion which, perhaps, was not fair to the young man with the beautifully pointed mustache and the beautifully curled hair. At length, with impatient movements, she thrust the photograph into the bottom of the trunk, heaped other things on top of it, and with a jerk locked the trunk.

About the same time, unusual things were happening to Guthrie. When he left the Capitol, his recent feeling of despondency returned to him with greater force than

ever. He had yielded again to a charm that he had taken a silent oath to resist; he had revelled in the sunshine when he had sworn to keep to the shadow, and he did not like the proof of his own weakness.

He passed through the lobby of the hotel, giving and taking the usual greetings, and entered the corridor that led to his room; but he was stopped in the narrow passage by a small, smoothly shaved man dressed in gray—none other than Mr. Caius Marcellus Harlow, now, as always, trim, suave, and calm.

Mr. Harlow held out his hand, but Guthrie hesitated. Mr. Harlow, still calm and suave, offered his hand again.

"You need not be angry with me, Mr. Guthrie," he said. "It was not I who made you the offer of the money in the trust company vault, as I told you once before, nor did I advise it. In fact, I fought against it strenuously. It was Charlie Warren who insisted on the truth of the old saying that every man has his price, and he has found out his mistake. That saying is very often untrue, Mr. Guthrie, I assure you, and I have had plenty of opportunities to know."

"I like to hear you say so," said Guthrie, aimlessly, not knowing what Mr. Harlow had in mind, but waiting to see.

"I arrived from New York this morning," resumed Mr. Harlow, "and my chief object to-day has been to meet you. I wish to have with you a private talk of importance. Your room or mine will serve."

"Come to my room," said Guthrie, wondering what the lobbyist could have to say to him now, and, despite himself, feeling a sort of liking for this smooth, resourceful man. He gave Mr. Harlow a seat by the window,

and took another chair near-by where he waited, expectant.

"A fine view of the river and the hills," said Mr. Harlow. "The first green of spring is something wonderfully tender and beautiful."

"It is so," said Guthrie dryly.

"Which is not business," continued Mr. Harlow with a laugh, "but I come to it at once. In short, Mr. Warren has gone out of the New York firm that I represent. There was trouble over the exposure in the *Times*, and the older members concluded that perhaps Mr. Warren was a trifle too smart; in fact, that he was ultra-modern in his methods. Their prestige has been lowered by this affair, their credit damaged, and their business injured. So it was thought best that they and Mr. Warren should part. Now they are going to be more conservative in their methods; that is, they are going to eschew what I may call the *risqué*."

"But how does this concern me?" asked Guthrie.

"It concerns you very greatly—if you are willing that it should do so. We want a brisk, active young man—one whom people will involuntarily trust, to represent us in various important quarters. He is to be thoroughly honest; he will not be called upon to do anything that goes against the grain."

"This has to do with money?"

"Yes, and in large amounts. Would you mind telling me, Mr. Guthrie, what salary you get?"

Guthrie named a modest sum.

"We are prepared to pay you three times as much to begin with and to give you a three years' contract. After that, if you develop, and I have not the slightest doubt that you will, you would be worth more. You

could almost name your own price. What do you say, Mr. Guthrie? I cannot recall when such another offer was made to a man of your youth."

"I am surprised," said Guthrie, "that your people should want me. I did not consider their feelings when I spoke to them."

"In high finance, there is no such thing as feelings."

Guthrie closed his eyes for a moment. The offer was a surprise, a great surprise. Until recently, he had not felt the need of money, of a much larger income. He was so deeply engrossed in his work, and his wants had always been so modest, that the question of salary was seldom in his mind. But now a new motive had entered, and it was far from being a sordid one.

The pay offered by the New York firm was large, very large. Perhaps not half a dozen men in his State were receiving such a salary; it was certainly more than the Governor's, and, with such an income, certain barriers that had seemed impassable would disappear. He could see again a wistful, lovely face, and Guthrie was sorely tempted. He would enter the lists fairly against that other man in Europe, and he suddenly realised that he did not now and never had feared him.

"Well, what do you say, Mr. Guthrie?"

The voice seemed to come from afar off, and Guthrie did not yet answer.

The face of Clarice Ransome, the wistful eyes with the little touch of sadness, lured him on, and, for a moment, he felt a thrill of exultation; but it was only for a moment, —then he saw the other side; this was not work for which he cared, he did not even feel a remote interest in it, and he could not; there were only two things in which he was deeply interested—journalism, with its literary

fringe, and public life—and he had sufficient knowledge of himself now to know that he could never change.

And, besides the work, there was the question of what it would lead to. Mr. Harlow had promised that he should have nothing of a shady nature to do; but that promise—even if it were made in good faith—could it be kept? “High Finance” was an expansive term. There was great width between top and bottom, and within its ample spaces were bred many forms of activity. Guthrie was convinced—in fact, he knew—that the promise could not be kept, although he did not question Mr. Harlow’s good faith. The pressure of circumstance and the fierce competition of others in “High Finance” would be too great.

The face of Clarice Ransome was still before him. Guthrie’s young soul was pure, and in it womanhood was enshrined, with Clarice as the concrete embodiment. He longed to enter the combat for her, but, if the victory were won, he must come to her with it fairly won. She would be the last to approve of shady methods, he must lose her respect as well as his own, and, purely and deeply as he loved her, he did not wish to win her unless he could win her worthily. No; the obstacles were still there, the barriers had not melted away.

He opened his eyes, they had not been closed more than twenty seconds, so rapid was the passage of his thoughts, and he still heard the voice of Mr. Harlow, coming from far away like an echo:

“Well, Mr. Guthrie, what is your answer?”

Guthrie shook his head.

“I thank you, Mr. Harlow,” he said; “because I think it is through your influence that this offer has been made to me, but I cannot accept it. I am not fitted for

the work; it does not interest me at all. I must fight it out here as I have begun."

A shade of disappointment passed over Mr. Harlow's face.

"I am sorry that you have come to this conclusion," he said; "I like you, and I am sure that you would prove a great success. I think that you are standing in your own light, Mr. Guthrie, not alone financially, but in something else that is very dear to you."

He looked squarely into Guthrie's eyes, and Guthrie knew that he understood. Nothing in the little capital ever escaped the keen eyes of Caius Marcellus Harlow. None of all the things that had passed so quickly in the mind of the young correspondent was a secret to him. Guthrie flushed and then he added quietly:

"That was one of my reasons for declining, Mr. Harlow."

The lobbyist arose.

"I judge from your tone, Mr. Guthrie, that this answer is final," he said. "You have shown more self-sacrifice than would have been possible for me, but, at the same time, I can understand it and appreciate it. I should like to shake hands with you before I go to the telegraph office to send my answer."

He extended his hand once more, and Guthrie shook it heartily. When Mr. Harlow was gone, he sat by the window and looked out at the circling hills now gilded by the red gold of the setting sun. The refusal had cost him an effort. He did not make sacrifices merely as a sort of personal flattery to himself. He was no such prig as that. Clarice now seemed farthier away than ever, and he found no consolation in the darkening evening.

His bell rang, and, when he responded "Come in!" one of the hotel boys entered with the day's mail, and laid it on the table beside him. There were half a dozen letters, and Guthrie began to open them without curiosity. The fourth was rather thick, with the address carefully typewritten. Before opening it, he noticed that it was postmarked New York, and this aroused some interest. "Who can be writing to me from New York?" he thought. But, when he began to read, his interest increased rapidly.

The letter was from the proprietor of a newspaper in New York, widely known and popularly classed under the name of "yellow." The owner, a man of immense wealth, had recently bought this paper, and was spending millions upon it. He was literally buying for its service men whom he thought valuable, and it had reached the limits in sensationalism.

It was the owner himself who was now writing to Guthrie. He said that the young correspondent's wonderful penetration, will, and energy, as shown in the "United" case, had been brought to his attention. Nor had his informants failed to tell him of his courage and judgment in the mountains with Senator Pike. It was for just such men as this that he was looking. Men who would faithfully do routine work or what their predecessors had done were common—these were the ordinary virtues; but men who could think for themselves, and, having thought, dared to do things original and striking were rare. They were the kind that he needed in his work, and it was to this kind that he was sure Mr. Guthrie belonged. Hence he sent him an offer to come to New York and join his staff. He named the salary, which was a thousand a year above

that of Mr. Harlow's people, and, like Mr. Harlow, he offered a three-year contract. He held forth, too, all the promise of a brilliant future.

It was a typewritten letter, covering several pages, and, when Guthrie had read it all through carefully, he went back and read it all again with equal care. There could be no question as to its authenticity, and, even as he read, there was a ring at the door, and a telegram from the owner of the newspaper was delivered to him, saying: "Kindly answer my letter of the 7th inst. as soon as possible. Waiting for you."

Guthrie felt again that sudden swell of triumph. He was young. It was impossible not to be flattered by these great and unexpected offers. This last was in his own profession. It was merely a moving forward. New York was the first arena of modern journalism, and there he could find full opportunity for the exercise of the powers that he felt within him. Like every other American youth of ambition, his mind had often turned longingly to this mighty metropolis of all the States, and now the opportunity to go was brought to him, and he was almost begged to take it. To him there were but two great theatres of action on the Western continent; one was Washington, the theatre of public life, and the other was New York, the theatre of all the talents.

Guthrie again looked out of the window, but it was dark on the hills, and the shadows found their counterpart in his own mind, because now, as in the first case, the picture was presenting the other side. And there was another side.

He had often seen the newspaper which was now making him so munificent an offer—in fact, it could escape the attention of few, and his mind revolted at its

crude pages. In his opinion, no newspaper could be great without a purpose, without convictions. It must have beliefs, real and sincere, concerning the chief topics of the day, and must express them even in the face of the majority and at a risk. He despised an editor or an owner who would run with the crowd, merely because it was the crowd. Vigilant news-gathering he respected, but he did not believe it to be all; beyond lay the duty to instruct, to teach, to lead the way, to stand in the face of all things for what the owner believed to be the right.

Guthrie could see no proof of such a purpose in the newspaper that was seeking him. No stir of life lighted up its arid pages; its sole object seemed to be the achievement of circulation; its owner apparently had no convictions on the great questions of the day—perhaps he did not know that they existed.

Could he do himself justice there? What would his work be? He recalled the last copy of the newspaper that he had seen, and he could not remember any place in it for what he had to give. Yet the offer was most tempting. Perhaps the owner was about to enter new fields of journalistic endeavour, and, having it in mind, had chosen Guthrie as one of his pilots. Again he thought of Clarice with the touch of sadness in her eyes.

There was a step in the hall outside, a quick knock at the door, and Jimmy Warfield, scarcely waiting for an invitation, entered noisily and cheerfully.

"What, ho, Billy!" he cried. "Why don't you light up? Don't you see that the dark has come upon us?"

Guthrie turned on the lights.

"Why do you look so serious?" exclaimed Warfield when he saw his face. "Have you another great problem on hand?"

"Yes, I have, Jimmy, but it is one that concerns me only. However, I am not above advice from a friend. Read that, and tell me what you think of it."

He handed the letter to Warfield, who read it carefully, and then whistled.

"That's a lot of money, Billy," he said. "I don't expect to earn as much in a good many years."

"But that is not telling me what you think of it."

"Well, Billy, I've seen a few copies of this newspaper, which has suddenly got the idea that you are a great man."

"But you don't give advice."

"I'd rather not. I can say, however, that we'd be mighty sorry to lose you in this State."

"Jimmy," said Guthrie, and he felt something stir at his heart, "I believe that what you are telling me is true."

"Of course! Of course!" said Warfield cheerily, affecting lightness because he saw that Guthrie was really moved.

"I won't ask you for your opinion again," said Guthrie, "but I'll tell you what I'll do. You've come in to see me because you didn't have anything particular on hand. Suppose, we sit here and talk about everything under the sun except this letter."

"Good enough," said Warfield, and he launched at once upon the gossip of the town. He was never gayer and brighter, and he was like a whiff of a spring wind in the room which had been so lonely before.

Jimmy Warfield was a wise man and observant, and he soon brought the cheerful flow of his talk to the Governor's group.

"Miss Ransome is going back to her father's house

next week," he said, "and Mrs. Hastings and Miss Pelham are to visit her very soon."

"What about Carton?"

"I think it likely that he will go up there, too. The trouble between him and Mary Pelham is bound to be settled before long. All it needs is an explosion."

"An explosion?"

"Yes, somebody or something to smash up the barrier that has formed between them. I've a good notion to get the two together—by force, if necessary—tell them to their faces that they have been very foolish, and then leave them to settle it as best they can."

Guthrie laughed.

"I wouldn't risk it if I were you, Jimmy," he said.

"No, I suppose I won't, but I'm tempted. Now there's another thing on my mind: Clarice Ransome is going to marry that jumping-jack of a count—I've never seen him, but I know he must be a jumping-jack. It's a genuine wasting of sweetness on the desert air. You know how honourable and high-minded she is—what lofty ideas she has of things. He can't possibly be worthy of her. I hope some good man in our State will kidnap her, and compel her to marry him; it would be a violent deed in a just cause."

Guthrie did not laugh this time. He was thinking of Warfield's words: "how honourable and high-minded she is—what lofty ideas she has of things." The very same thought of her had been running in his own mind.

When Jimmy Warfield left, Guthrie went to the telegraph office, and sent to the owner of the great newspaper in New York this short despatch:

"I thank you for your generous offer, but I cannot accept it. Urgent personal reasons forbid."

It is needless to say that Guthrie did not feel regrets over his double refusal. He had plenty of ambition, and now there was another motive still more powerful to drive him on. He thought often and with regret of the high pay offered to him and of all that it would make possible; but he had no idea of changing his resolve in either case.

The news of the two great offers to Guthrie spread in the little capital, one he had no doubt through Mr. Harlow and the other through Jimmy Warfield—he had not thought in the stress of the moment to bind either to secrecy—and now he was compelled to blush. The little newspaper of the town announced with a fine flourish that the fame of Mr. Guthrie, the correspondent of the *Times*, so popular with all who knew him and they were many, had spread far. Then it described with generous detail the grand offers that had been made to him, and announced loftily that he was considering them.

Guthrie was compelled to hide. His modesty suffered in reality. He understood the local pride which always painted its own in as vivid colours as possible, but this was going pretty far, and he felt as if he were made to appear very much more than he was.

True to his former resolution, he did not go near the Governor's house until the morning for the excursion in the woods, knowing now that he had all the greater reason for self-denial.

The day was good for their arrangements, the spring unfolding fresh beauty and loveliness in every curve of hill and valley. Here and there tiny wild flowers were beginning already to show vivid colours in the grass.

They wandered far back from the river until the

capital was hidden from their sight by the swelling hills. Only a plume of smoke marked where it stood. Here, in the general drift, Guthrie at last found himself again with Clarice, and none other was near. He had noticed that she was unusually silent that day; the little touch of sadness in her eyes seemed to have deepened, and it found a sympathetic chord in his own heart.

"I suppose, Mr. Guthrie," she said, after some aimless talk, "that you are going to leave the old State and achieve your fortune in New York. We have been reading of all your triumphs, and everybody has been talking of them, too."

"I am not going to do either. The old State cannot get rid of me just yet."

She had picked one of the tiny wild flowers from the grass, and held the delicate blossom between her fingers. She glanced covertly at him when he spoke, but her eyes did not express surprise.

"No," he continued, "I am not going."

"They were great offers, unless report has exaggerated."

"Financially, they were large offers—very large for me. In neither case, should I have been worth the sum."

"Was that the reason you declined?"

He had fallen, almost without knowing it, into the habit of telling her his hopes and fears, and it was natural for her to ask him his reasons. He flushed suddenly as he thought of the real cause. But he replied frankly.

"No, it was not. I had in my mind the good opinion of others. I could not do the work those men wanted me to do."

He had felt the wish to talk to some one, to excuse himself even for his refusals, and now he poured out all his thoughts to her. There was something inexpressibly sweet to him in this confidence, this liberty to tell her all. He described to her every detail of the interview with Mr. Harlow, and he gave her the letter of the newspaper editor to read.

Guthrie watched her as she read the letter, but some of her emotions were hidden from him. When she finished, she said quietly, "I think you were right, Mr. Guthrie; you could not accept either this offer or the other. You were made for a different kind of work."

But she uttered a little sigh, so soft that she scarcely knew of it herself, and Guthrie did not hear.

That night she took the photograph from the bottom of her trunk, tore it up, and threw the pieces in the fire.

The Legislature adjourned three days later, and, amid many regrets, the great political family dispersed, each to his own corner of the State. But these were not sad regrets. In this State, everybody is continually meeting everybody else all through life.

Clarice went directly to her home in the city, and her father met her with joy unrestrained upon his broad honest face. How big and kind he looked! And how handsome was his homely face! How could she ever go away and leave him! Then she looked at the great brick house with the white shutters, in which she was born, and at the wide green lawn with the shadowing oaks; she would find abroad nothing more beautiful and nothing more friendly or protecting.

That night, at dinner, her mother said:

"I suppose, Clarice, since you are no longer com-

pelled to meet him, that you will see no more of young Mr. Guthrie."

"On the contrary, mother," replied Clarice, "I have asked him to call upon me here, and he has promised to do so."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIGHT IN THE OLD FOURTH

WHEN the Legislature adjourned, Guthrie did not linger at the capital, but joined at once in the general exodus. The train which bore him to the city, his home, also carried Tommy Newlands, Jimmy Warfield, Mr. Pursley, Carton, who had business to transact in the metropolis, and many others belonging to the capital circle.

They made a big group, with the exception of Mr. Pursley, who was crestfallen and under a very thick and black cloud. There was nothing tangible against him, although everybody believed that he had been the paid agent of the "United," which never again would have the slightest chance of passing the Legislature. This belief was sufficient to ruin Mr. Pursley's political career for the time at least, and he was not to be a candidate for reelection to the Legislature, wisely choosing a temporary obscurity, although Guthrie believed that he would try to make capital out of the coming fight over the congressional election in the Fourth District. But, as it was, Mr. Pursley was now gloomy, and secluded himself in a forward car, while all the others sat in the "smoker."

Carton was vastly improved in manner. The ordeal through which he had passed so triumphantly had softened his nature. He seemed to realise at last that, to

some extent, he had brought hostility upon himself, and he was grateful, too, to these friends who had stood by him through all, and who had saved him. There was yet coldness between him and Mary Pelham, but Guthrie began to believe in Jimmy Warfield's prediction that an "explosion" would drive it away, and he looked forward hopefully to the time when the "explosion" would come.

As for Guthrie, he was yet a hero, much to his embarrassment, and, when they were half-way to the city, Tommy Newlands drew from his pocket a sheet of paper with ominous writing upon it.

"Billy," he said, "I have written a poem describing your gallant deeds, and I really think it is the best thing I have ever done. Gentlemen, I will read it to you."

"Read it! Read it!" they cried.

Guthrie arose, a ferocious frown on his face.

"Tommy," he exclaimed, "I warned you once what I should do if ever again you undertook to read one of your poems to me, and now you not only try to read one to me, but it is about me!"

He snatched the paper from Newlands' hands, and threw it out of the window. Newlands groaned, and the others laughed.

"Never mind, Tommy," said Warfield, "it is not lost. Some farmer will pick it up, and it will be passed about all through the rural districts. It will have a wonderful circulation."

An hour later they were in the city, and the next day Guthrie attended a caucus of the party leaders in the Fourth Congressional District, called to consider the action of Henry Clay Warner, the incumbent, who was giving the most serious trouble.

It gratified Gutlirie's pride to be present at the secret caucus of the party leaders, but the fight in the Old Fourth was a weight upon his mind, and it became evident to him as the men talked that none of them saw a way out of the trouble. Neither could he, a much interested spectator, suggest any course, were he asked, and he was glad to be free from the responsibility.

He sat near the window, and, his attention wandering at last from the unsolved and vexing political question, he looked idly through the dusty pane at the people passing in the street. An automobile, the first to arrive in the city, whizzed by, and he followed it vaguely with his eyes, until it disappeared around the next block; the electric cars passed at intervals with a heavy, jarring sound, and then a carriage full of pretty girls in light fluffy dresses held him for a moment; but it was only a moment, because there, on the other side of the street, was Clarice Ransome, prettier than any of the pretty girls in the carriage—even the dusty window-pane could not hide her youth and freshness—and, by bending his head forward a little, his eyes were able to follow her longer than they had traced the course of the automobile.

Clarice had been increasingly in his thoughts lately, and he was beginning to realise that her place there was not likely to diminish. Both Lucy Hastings and Mary Pelham would be at her house in a few days for a long visit. Carton was likely to come, the Governor would run down now and then, Senator Pike's new office was located in the city, Warfield lived there, and Senator Cobb would certainly be present at the convention. The seat of action, but not the people, was changed.

He would yet be surrounded by the old capital group with all its influences and associations.

Guthrie still felt that he had no right to seek Clarice Ransome—that is, to pay court to her; but he would not deny himself the sight of her face, or an occasional hour in her presence. There was no moral law calling for such self-denial, and he would exercise his privilege until that hideous count came to claim her, despite the frowns of Mrs. Ransome who, fortunately, was not all-powerful. Then his thoughts returned to the meeting that he was attending.

“It’s absolutely certain that we must get Warner off the track, or we are done for,” said Hay, the chief party-worker. “If we don’t, a Republican Congressman will go to Washington from the Old Fourth as sure as shooting!”

But no one could suggest a way to make Warner retire.

“It never had a Republican representative,” said Mr. Parton, the editor of the *Gazette*, an afternoon Democratic daily, a man of ability and lofty character. “We have been free of that disgrace so far.”

“A freedom that does not promise to last,” said Willis, the county judge. “What a shame that the party should be loaded up with a stupid, obstinate man like Warner! Is there no way to placate those Prohibitionists?”

“None, except to get Warner off the track,” replied Hay, “and that we haven’t been able to do. He claims that he is entitled to a renomination, says we are down on him because he wouldn’t help our men to office, and swears he’ll stay in the race until the polls close on Election Day.”

“And he’s been seen drunk twice on the streets of Washington,” said Tom Graham, Hay’s chief lieutenant.

ant. "It's the first time the Old Fourth was ever disgraced before the whole nation!"

It seemed a shame to Guthrie that the glorious old party should be wrecked in the Fourth District by an obstinate, drinking man like Warner. It was clear that the Prohibitionists, five thousand strong, who usually voted with the Democrats would never support Warner, and since many straight Democrats would reject him, too, the split in their ranks was sure to give the Republicans an easy victory. It was enough to make a man, bred in party traditions, as all are in this State, hot with wrath, and seek everywhere for a way out of the trouble.

Perkins, the Republican candidate, in an ordinary time would have had no chance, as the Old Fourth was at least five thousand Democratic with a united party, but now, alas, the party was grievously, hopelessly split, and the heavy-jawed, coarse-minded Perkins was to sit for the famous Old Fourth in the Capitol of the nation. All the correspondents hated him, as he habitually violated the code of ethics established in this State by the press and public men in their mutual dealings. Guthrie remembered very well an interview with Perkins that he had written once for the *Times*, chiefly at the man's own suggestion, but which Perkins afterward denied, the effect being other than he wished. Guthrie's face flamed now at the memory of it, and his blood grew hot.

Avery, the national committeeman, made a little speech, speaking in a low, even voice, but very much to the point. He reminded them that the next House, so every shrewd observer said, would be almost even between the Democrats and the Republicans, and a

single district might turn the balance of power, hence the trouble in the Old Fourth, and a district usually so sure for the Democrats had risen to national importance. The big men at Washington—those of both parties—were watching it, and while the Republicans were glad, the Democrats were sad. Warner's fellow members had tried to make him listen to reason, the two white-headed senators from the State had talked to him again and again, telling him how he was ruining the party as well as himself, but in vain—nothing could move the stubborn man from his purpose; particularly as he thought he had a grievance against the party leaders in his district, and his stubbornness was increased by his feeling of injury. He was egged on by Timothy O'Hara, an Irish demagogue who posed as a labour leader.

The speech was received with attention, but still no one could suggest a way, and they adjourned without action.

Guthrie remained a while with several of the others and talked in a desultory way about the general prospects of the campaign, and the respective chances of Graves and Headly, also candidates for the Democratic nomination. Graves was a rich distiller, who had long cherished a political ambition, and who thought the time had come to gratify it. Headly was a lawyer of ability, desirous also of going to Congress. Both were respectable men, not brilliant, but of good standing and industrious, and the leaders present in the caucus did not care which was nominated. Both were willing to go into a convention or submit their claims to a primary election, but Warner refused to do so, claiming that all the party machinery would be

used unfairly to beat him, and, therefore, he intended to run on his own platform—a thing unheard of before in the Old Fourth, and well calculated to make the party leaders stand aghast.

Guthrie left alone, after the talk, lingered a little by the way; twilight was coming: the afternoon heat was over, and everybody was on the streets.

It was a good city of 200,000 people, sitting beside a great river, on the border line of North and South, and looking both ways. Thus, northern people called it southern, and southern people sometimes called it northern; but it was more southern than northern, because, while now and then northern in mode of thought, it was always southern in manner and speech.

The street down which he was walking, led straight and quickly to the river, a light yellow current, nearly a mile wide, flowing on slowly and quietly with all the gravity of ages. The "knobs," as the high hills on the farther shore are locally called, were in the fresh bloom of early spring, and made a brilliant background for the wide, yellow river. But here and there, amid the masses of green that almost covered the rugged slopes, the delicate pink of a peach-tree in new bloom shone like a rose against a lady's dress. And above and beyond the green was the blue of the sky with streaks of red gold from the setting sun.

Guthrie was on the main artery of retail traffic, a street which five or six blocks from the heart of the city changes its character and becomes the finest and most fashionable residence avenue of the place. In either capacity, the town life flows through it, and Billy Guthrie knew everybody, and at least half of them called him by his first name.

He was busy now, bowing or speaking to his acquaintances, and some of the heavy political gloom that had settled over him was lifted. Then he met Clarice Ransome, and it was all gone for the time. When Clarice left the Capital, she had found that her newly awakened interest in public life was continuous. She knew that Guthrie was deeply concerned about the fight in the Old Fourth, and she wished, too, to know its developments.

When they had spoken of the Capital and their friends, Guthrie told her that he had been attending a caucus of the Democratic leaders.

"Didn't it form a plan to get Mr. Warner out of the way?" she asked.

"It was willing enough, but it couldn't devise any," he replied.

Then, seeing his gloomy feelings, she changed the talk to lighter topics, and the brightness of life came back to him as he walked home with her in the twilight. In June, that hour, when the narrowest rim of the sun is lingering just beyond the western hills and the night has not yet come, is a wonderful time in the city. It breathes of tender grass and new flowers, and troubles roll away. Guthrie felt it now in its fullest and keenest delight.

He left her at her father's door. He would not go in, not because he was afraid of Mrs. Ransome, but for the reason that he was to call the next evening and he did not wish to push himself. Mr. Ransome he knew already and liked.

But Guthrie stopped at the corner of the next block and looked back at the big house standing in the centre of the wide, green lawn. Again he felt that acute but

recent desire to be rich. He sighed and turning abruptly away, walked rapidly down the avenue.

The *Times* the next morning contained a double-leaded editorial, written by its celebrated editor, and headed, "To Your Tents, O Israel," dwelling on the necessity of party harmony, and why it was pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity. No names were called, nor was there any direct reference to the Old Fourth, but who and what were meant was plain to everybody. The great editor put the matter truthfully and in eloquent language, but several days passed and no sign came from Warner and his friends.

Guthrie meanwhile called at the Ransome house, and was well received by Clarice and her father, and non-committally by Mrs. Ransome, who talked throughout the evening about dear Raoul and his coming visit to America. Guthrie observing keenly, noticed that Mr. Ransome did not like it, but he was unable to judge of Clarice's feelings.

Two days later, Lucy Hastings and Mary Pelham arrived for their visit, and Guthrie called again. Now he knew that Mrs. Ransome was unhappy; her daughter was still surrounded by the associations that she had disliked at the capital, but old John Ransome was the prince of hosts, and when he saw Guthrie much by the side of Clarice, he was not offended. It was at this second call that he spoke of the congressional race. John Ransome shared Guthrie's feelings, but Mrs. Ransome expressed privately to her husband her horror of their awful politics; common politeness would not let her speak that way before Lucy Hastings, who was the wife of a governor. "Oh, pshaw! Jane," said Mr. Ransome.

Guthrie found that the temptation to be often at the Ransome house was irresistible. The wistful, almost pathetic look in Clarice's eyes that he surprised there now and then, drew him on, and while he was already sorry for himself, he began to feel sorry for her too. He did not know how dangerous to him was such a feeling.

Old John Ransome seemed to delight in the company of these young people, and he always pressed him to come back again. "They are my kind, and I like my kind," he once said to his wife. Warfield, too, came, and Carton, and the Governor, and one evening when Guthrie brought Senator Pike and Senator Cobb, they were all gathered in Mr. Ransome's big drawing-room. Even Tommy Newlands was not lacking, and it was a bright evening for the whole group,

The next morning at the breakfast table, when only the Ransomes were present, Mrs. Ransome said with obvious meaning:

"I am glad that Raoul will be here soon."

"He will not be here," said Clarice.

Mrs. Ransome let her fork drop. Mr. Ransome looked at his daughter and saw a firm, set expression upon her face. "My goodness, Clarice is not afraid of her mother!" was his sudden thought.

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Ransome in her most terrible tones.

"I have written to him not to come," replied Clarice.

"Not to come?"

"Not to come; never to come; I have told him that I cannot marry him. It was a mistake. His people are not my people, and my people are not his. We

could never be happy together, and I have taken the course that I think is right.

"And you are right, Clarice, God bless you!" exclaimed John Ransome. And in his foolish fondness he arose from the table and kissed his daughter on either cheek. But Mrs. Ransome was all ice.

"Then I suppose, since you have behaved so badly to Raoul, you mean to marry this newspaper fellow, Guthrie," she said.

"If he asks me I certainly shall," replied Clarice serenely, though she was very pale, "but he has not asked me yet."

Mrs. Ransome, aghast with horror, swept out of the room. Mr. Ransome was silent, overwhelmed by his rising admiration for his daughter.

Guthrie often talked over the political situation with Clarice, and she shared his wish to find a way out, if such a way there was. She had an abiding faith in Guthrie. She admired his zeal and believed in his ability. He still cherished the hope that he would become some day the head of the Washington bureau of the *Times*, and there on the great stage of the national capital find full scope for his talents. Wallace, the present head, was getting old and stiff, and before many years he must have an assistant—an assistant nominally, but a chief so far as the work was concerned.

"When that assistant is selected, I intend to be the man, Miss Ransome," he repeated, "and then I won't be going around the counties here, hunting up the news of peanut politics. One can find at Washington the things that count."

He never spoke to her of love, but she could see it in his eyes, and she knew what held him back. For the

first time in her life, she was dissatisfied with her father's wealth. The news of her broken engagement to Raoul was soon spread over the city. She mentioned it herself to a few of her personal friends, and she did not ask them to keep it a secret. Lucy and Mary offered her their quiet congratulations. "I think you have chosen the wise course, Clarice," each of them said. Her father, too, was a tower of strength to her in these days, and she had a vast sense of relief.

She was happy now in the big house, surrounded by her friends of the two cities, the capital and this, and she did not notice how seldom they spoke of Guthrie in his absence. He was never obtruded upon her, but, besides seeing him often, she heard of him almost daily in the general flow of the public life of the city.

Warner returned suddenly from Washington, but his friends, apprised in advance of his coming, organised a great reception and a torchlight parade, accompanied by so much tumult and such a flashing of sky-rockets and Roman candles, that the masses were impressed. Warner himself was exultant, and took no pains to conceal it. "After all, the people are for me," he said, and his opponents felt that they had been caught napping.

The leaders decided upon a convention rather than a primary election, although it would be useless unless they could get Warner into it. Still, for the sake of regularity, they must observe the forms, and Guthrie went forth the very next day to follow the campaign which Warner was beginning.

The member intended to make what he called a "whirlwind campaign"—that is, to use his own expression, he was going to talk the people "clean off their

feet," speech succeeding speech so fast that they would not have time to recover from one before they were hit with another. But, when Guthrie looked at his schedule, he noticed that at least half the speeches were to be made in the eleventh and twelfth wards, thickly inhabited by the most ignorant part of the city's population. Warner cunningly preferring to campaign among his own friends, where he would receive the most applause, and, therefore, make the deepest impression on the public.

Headly and Graves were already in the field, each making a vigorous canvass, and each announcing in every speech that he was ready to abide by the decision of a convention. Each also challenged Warner to a joint debate, or series of debates, in which the three should participate, but Warner declined all such offers, and made a merit of it, saying that Headly and Graves were silk stockings, and the representatives of plutocrats, and he, a real Democrat, could not afford to associate with them. No, he preferred to talk to the people in his own way.

Warner was glad when he heard that Guthrie was to report him, having a strong faith in Guthrie, despite the fact that he worked for the enemy. But he soon began to feel disappointed with the accounts of his campaign that appeared in the *Times*, although he could not tell just where the fault lay. They seemed to miss the effect that his speeches, in his opinion, created, although he could not pick out a single sentence anywhere and say it was untrue. When he read his *Times* every morning at the breakfast table, it fell upon him like a wet blanket, and he went back to his campaign with decreased energy and spirits.

Guthrie in thus reporting Warner's campaign was not pursuing any preconcerted plan. He had asked to go with him in behalf of his newspaper, because he thought that, by dwelling upon one or two points in their talk, he might influence the man's mind, and there was always a chance that the campaign would develop some favourable opportunity. Unconsciously, he began to colour his reports with his own feelings; as his contempt for Warner increased, he could not keep from putting in his accounts every foolish display that the member made of himself, and they were numerous. These were the incidents that appealed to Guthrie most strongly now, and, as a consequence, they appeared most vividly in his narrative. Mr. Stetson saw what was happening, but he kept his own counsel.

At the Ransome house, where Guthrie was a constant visitor, these reports were read with the greatest interest. John Ransome chuckled over them, and more than once avowed his opinion that "young Guthrie was a deuced clever fellow." Clarice said nothing, but in such moments she had a very warm feeling for her father. Mrs. Ransome preserved a majestic silence. She had told her husband once that she was going to "have it out" with Clarice, and after she "had it out," she looked so glum that he did not venture to ask her any questions. But he laughed softly and said to himself, "Jane ought to remember that Clarice is her own daughter."

Nearly two weeks passed, and whenever Guthrie saw Clarice and was asked to report progress, he would shake his head doubtfully. "I'm sure of only one thing," he would say, "namely, that the bottom is falling out of Warner's canvass. But the weaker he

becomes with the people, the more stubborn he may grow personally; it often has that effect, you know. And if we can't get him off the track or into the convention, we're done for, anyhow. Five thousand Prohibitionists bolting from us make it a sure thing for Perkins."

But she would not despair. She did not know just why it was, she said, but she felt that everything would yet come out all right, the Old Fourth would be saved, and he would get his appointment.

Warner began to turn to Guthrie for suggestions which would go well in his speeches, ideas about democracy, and the duty of a member to his constituents, and Guthrie, who had made a thorough study of politics, besides having a wide experience as a spectator, always furnished them. He still retained a certain sympathy for Warner, and he could not refuse such requests. In this way, and almost unconsciously, he became an increasingly heavy contributor to the material of Warner's speeches, and the really good parts of them—the parts which dealt with genuine public questions, and not mere local squabbles, came from Guthrie.

This had been going on for some time before Guthrie realised suddenly what he was doing, and the discovery put an idea in his head. He was hopeful again of getting Warner into the convention, and he wrote a speech of renunciation for the refractory member. He wrote it without any suggestion from Warner, in fact, without his knowledge, but it appealed to him as the speech the member ought to make in the convention; it was the duty that he owed to his district, to his party and to justice.

Guthrie was so full of the subject, he had looked at it so keenly from every point of view, and he felt so deeply about it, that it was not hard for him to transfer his thoughts to paper, and to express them in the manner that seemed to him fitting. So he was pleased when he finished the speech and read it over to see its effect. In order not to be deceived, he read it also to Clarice, whom he usually found to be a just and fearless critic.

"Fine! Fine!" she said, "but it is wasted. What do you expect to do with it? You know that you can never make Warner deliver that speech."

"I'm not so sure that I can't," he replied. "Anyway I may be able to instill it into him, bit by bit, and in the end he'll say it all, though I admit that the effect like the speech will be scattered."

He laughed a little, and then added resolutely:

"No, he's got to say this speech all at once, and I'll make him. I'll find an opportunity yet."

The time set for the convention was drawing near, and Guthrie's whole plan now was to accustom Warner's mind to the idea of renunciation. Holding this in view, he sought to instil little bits of his speech to that effect into Warner's addresses, succeeding in some cases, and failing in others. Nevertheless, he created an effect, changing to a slight extent the tone of Warner's campaign, and he persisted.

The fact that Guthrie had written a speech, which he wanted Warner to make became known in some manner to others than Clarice and himself. Perhaps Clarice whispered it to somebody, who whispered it to somebody else, but in any event, Mr. Stetson called him into his private office one evening, and said:

"I hear that you have written a speech for Warner, Mr. Guthrie."

Guthrie reddened and was confused, but answered in a few moments:

"Yes, I have, but I'm afraid he won't deliver it."

"Is it a good speech?" asked Mr. Stetson whimsically.

"I don't know, but I think it fits the case."

"If it does that, it is certainly a good speech. Let me see it."

Guthrie was embarrassed by this unexpected request, which, coming from his superior officer, amounted to an order, and he was glad that he did not have his manuscript with him. But Mr. Stetson would not content himself with such an explanation, and he demanded that Guthrie repeat to him the speech, or at least the gist of it. Guthrie despite many endeavours to evade the request, was compelled to yield at last, and recite the speech, which he knew word for word.

The keynote of this address was self-sacrifice—the necessity, when one becomes an obstruction, of standing aside for the sake of the party and for the good of the country, the sinking of ambition, in order to promote the general welfare. Other things were emphasised, but this was the point upon which he dwelt, and he felt everything that he said, as he recited his speech to Mr. Stetson. He spoke in a low tone, but his voice was full of feeling—he had thought so long and so hard upon this subject that he was carried a little bit out of himself as he spoke. When he came to the end, he was surprised to find that he had delivered it without embarrassment.

Mr. Stetson said only a word or two, just enough to indicate his satisfaction.

"I hope you'll get him to make that speech in the convention, and then withdraw," said he.

Guthrie did not know that Mr. Stetson's eyes followed him as he went out, and that after his steps died away down the hall, the great editor's face wore a very thoughtful look.

The convention was now almost at hand, and Guthrie felt that affairs were going well. The Prohibitionists still refrained from a nomination, though their front was as menacing as ever, and beyond a doubt they would keep their word unless Warner was forced off the track. But Guthrie reported to the leaders that Warner might yet weaken, as he was daily growing more discouraged.

"I think I'll see Washington, Miss Ransome," he said, "but the odds are still against me, and I've got to fight awful hard."

The day before the convention Guthrie heard a piece of news that affected him very greatly, touching as it did, his tenderest feelings. It was already known to many people, but as often happens, he whom it concerned so much was among the last that it reached. He was with Warfield, and he was compelled to speak in some connection of the distant Raoul.

"I suppose he will be here soon," he said.

Jimmy Warfield stared at him in amazement.

"Why, haven't you heard?" he exclaimed. "He's not coming."

"Not coming?"

"No; the engagement is broken. Miss Ransome, fortunately, I think, found out in time that she didn't

love him, and she had the courage to tell him so, or at least write him so. Why, the whole town knows it!"

Guthrie was silent, and Jimmy Warfield watched his face curiously, but he did not allude again to the subject. Guthrie felt at first a mighty sense of relief, but after a while it passed away. He had never really feared Raoul; he could never persuade himself that Clarice was going to marry that hirsute foreigner, and now the news was but a confirmation of his belief. The real obstacle remained.

But he honoured Clarice for her courage, and when next he met her there was such a strain of tenderness in his voice, that, startled, she looked at him questioningly, and then dropped her eyes. But he spoke only of current subjects

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONVENTION

A CONVENTION in the Old Fourth, as well as any other district of this State, is more than a political occasion; it is also social and sportive, or, at times, it may even have a religious colour, becoming, in short, a festive event, tinged now and then with solemnity, and an underlying, but never forgotten serious purpose. They develop, too, the variety and humour of life in a State, rich in all these respects, and hence everybody except the defeated candidates, who are supposed not to complain, enjoys them.

But no one of this generation remembered a convention in the Old Fourth which excited so much interest as the one now about to be called to order. It contained the elements likely to excite keen curiosity and a desire to attend: Warner's peculiar position, the uncertainty of his course, the angry shadow of the Prohibitionists hovering over them, and the well-known fact that the whole fate of the next Congress might turn upon this convention. Guthrie had a talk with Warner on the eve of it, but he could get from him no promise.

He reported this lack of success again at the Ransome house, and his look was disconsolate as he made his report. But Clarice spoke cheerfully.

"I believe that you will succeed yet, Mr. Guthrie,"

she said, and Guthrie gave her a grateful glance. Her faith in him reacted upon him, and gave him self-confidence.

Carton was in the city again, having decided to attend the convention in the Fourth, which would be of absorbing interest to every public man in the State, and he said to Guthrie: "The party in this State already owes you a great deal—I need not speak of myself again, and how much I owe you—and, to tell you the truth, you seem to be the chief reliance in this affair. Now what do you expect if you succeed in it?"

It was the same question that Clarice Ransome had asked him more than once, and the coincidence struck Guthrie.

"The Washington bureau of the *Times* has been promised to me," he replied, "and I tell you, Philip Carton, that if you get on the wrong side in Congress I shall say so."

"I sincerely hope that you will get what you want, Billy," said Carton with emphasis.

Guthrie, although deeply disappointed by Warner's actions, was forced to be resigned and await the course of events in the convention itself.

It was said that Warner would be present on the floor of the convention, a proceeding unusual in a candidate—quite contrary to the code of political ethics, as practised throughout the State—and it was certain that the delegations from the eleventh and twelfth wards would be composed almost wholly of his friends.

Guthrie ascertained also that Pursley was working incessantly in Warner's favour, although he was very quiet about it, as his support, while the cloud of scandal

still rested upon him, was a doubtful asset. Guthrie knew that Pursley cared nothing for Warner, but was merely carrying on an agitation against those in power, hoping to profit by a revolution.

Templeton, too, appeared in the city, and was often with Pursley. All that Guthrie had foreseen was coming to pass—Templeton was sinking lower and lower.

The convention met early in the morning of a beautiful June day—one of those days that are not so rare in June in this State. Guthrie, from his seat at the press table on the stage in Music Hall, where the conventions always meet, could see through the rear windows, between the clefts of houses far across the wide, yellow river, to the hills, now clad in a deeper green. There all was peace and beauty, and he thought, with a half-smile, of the stormy times so soon to come on the floor here before him.

The earliness of the hour set for the opening of the convention did not keep the people from pouring into the hall before then. It is a great hall, the largest in the State, with an immense auditorium, two balconies above and eight boxes, but it was soon apparent that every seat would be taken. The boxes were filled with prominent men and their feminine relatives.

In one, sat the familiar "governor's group," the Governor and his wife, Mary Pelham, Clarice Ransome, Mrs. Dennison, Mr. Carton, Mr. Ransome, and Mr. Pike, now the pension commissioner. Mrs. Ransome had refused to come, saying that the affair did not interest her, but General and Mrs. Pelham were present.

Deep as was the political interest in this convention, it was evident at once that the social phase would not

be inferior. The city is famous for its pretty girls, and they are seen at their best in May and June, when they come out in thin, white or light-coloured dresses. Then, indeed, is the poet's simile of a "garden of girls" most fit. They were thick in the hall—everywhere except in the space railed off for the delegates, and there was not one who did not carry flowers or roses in her hair, or on her dress, in addition to those in her cheeks. The great hall was alive with vivid, beautiful, and varied colours, now contrasting, now blending into one harmonious whole.

It seemed like a vast bouquet to Guthrie, sitting modestly at the back of the stage, and looking toward the crowd, and it gave him a deep sense of pleasure and of pride. This was his district and his State, and these were his people. The convention rose before him, terrace on terrace of colour, but the crowd, nevertheless, still thickened, always seeking room for one more. Guthrie saw Warner slip in under the cover of his friends, and take a seat in the centre of the delegation from the twelfth ward, where his presence was not discovered, until he had been there some time, and thus the force of the blow was broken. Then an angry buzz of comment arose and filled the hall, but it soon died, because the convention was about to open, and Warner could not be permitted to occupy its attention now for any long period. Moreover, the great men were fast arriving, and they always came in state, a state which often they did not intend, but which the public enforced.

There were the two United States Senators, men of really large calibre, mentally as well as physically, and well-known throughout the nation, and Mr. Stetson,

more famous than either, and an ex-governor of the State with a bushy white head of hair, who had been a famous Confederate general, and another ex-governor of the State, also with a bushy white head of hair, who had been a famous Federal general. After these came the member from the Third District, a tall man with a smoothly shaven, classic face who was serving his third term as Speaker of the House, an office which the people of this State rank next to the presidency itself, and they shared, therefore, in the glory which the member from the Third shed about him. Hence they received him with applause fully equal to that which they bestowed upon Mr. Stetson, and after him came many others of more or less prominence, each recognised instantly by everybody, and each receiving his share of applause, graded in exact proportion to his merits.

It was all like a big family gathering. This is a peculiar State, not much affected by immigration, and having certain idiosyncrasies of character which differentiate it from the rest of the Union, but which bind its people more closely together. It is said that mortal enemies from this State, if they meet in a foreign land, become very much better friends than they can ever be with anybody around them. There was a great hum of talk, and the brightly coloured fans of the ladies were fluttering, but this hum was soon lost in the strains of popular music as the band in an upper box began to play.

The band swung into "Dixie," and a tremendous shout of applause was raised. "Dixie" being finished, it passed on to "Yankee Doodle," and again a shout of applause went up, though not so loud as before. It was all in perfect good humour, and the old Confed-

erates, and the old Federals sitting in the audience, often brother delegates, knee to knee, began to exchange for the fifteen hundredth time reminiscences of Antietam and the Wilderness. The two old ex-governors, the Federal and the Confederate, sitting side by side in a box were seen to shake hands vigorously in the enthusiasm of the moment, and then the roof lifted itself up at least an inch with the impact of the applause.

As Guthrie glanced over the audience, he caught the eye of Jimmy Warfield, who was chairman of the delegation from the sixth ward, who also was most zealous in the attempt to shelve Warner, believing it absolutely necessary, both in the interests of the party and of morality. He gave back a cheerful smile to Guthrie's look, but beyond him were the eleventh and twelfth wards, a solid mass of frowning delegates, bent on rule or ruin—that is, either to nominate Warner or to bolt the convention. Now, there was a distinct and manifest feeling of hostility on the part of the rest of the convention toward the eleventh and twelfth wards. The delegates who were compelled to sit nearest the space reserved for them, drew their chairs as far away as possible, and ostentatiously turned their backs. Mr. Pursley moved from seat to seat, helping his friends and fellow-rebels.

The sound of angry words arose; the buzz of feminine talk suddenly ceased, and many fans fluttered apprehensively. It was apparent that the convention should be called to order at once, and Grayson, the district committeeman, promptly did so. Then in accordance with the universal custom, prayer was offered. It was the Bishop who prayed. Having

come up from the capital on a visit, he had been asked to serve, a request with which he promptly complied. Never had Guthrie seen him looking nobler, with his fine head of white hair and lofty features. He prayed for the blessing of God upon the nation, upon the president, and upon all those assembled in the hall. When the prayer was over he quietly took a half-hidden seat at the rear of the stage.

Then Grayson quickly gave way to the temporary chairman, a non-committal and negative man named Andrews, who could be depended upon to pass a short and harmless life in the chair, yielding in his turn to the permanent chairman. There was no fight over the rules, nor was there a single contested seat among the delegates, everything being in clean-cut condition for the convention to proceed at once to its business, but while the committees were being selected the great political guns fired a few shots, much as the thirteen-inch cannon on a battleship are discharged for entertainment and instruction before the real test of the smaller calibre rapid-fire arms is made.

The first call from the crowd was for Mr. Stetson, who was always doubly welcome, as he rarely meddled in local politics, and, therefore, trod on no toes. After him came the two ex-governors, and the speaker of the National House.

Guthrie left the table after the second speech, and went to the room where the leaders were in conference, securing admittance on account of his well-known grave and high character, his deep and unselfish interest in politics, and the semi-official position that he had achieved. It was a bleak apartment, used ordinarily as a dressing-room by actors or singers who appeared

at Music Hall, but now it contained the elements of civil war.

All the leaders were in the room, and so were the representatives of Headly and Graves, each with a name ready to be proposed for the permanent chairmanship. But the centre of interest was a little red-faced angry Irishman, O'Hara, the leader of the Warner forces. He was with his back to the wall both literally and metaphorically, his doubled-up fists thrust into the pockets of his short sack coat, a shiny silk hat tipped back on his head—all the others were hatless.

"But what we want to know, Mr. O'Hara, is this," said Mr. Stetson, in a smooth, polite tone; "what does your principal, Mr. Warner, intend to do? Here are the representatives of Mr. Headly and Mr. Graves speaking for their principals, and willing to abide by the decision of the convention, whatever it may be. Will you not do the same?"

But O'Hara fiercely denounced what he called a lack of fair play, refused to agree to anything, and was strongly supported by Mr. Pursley, who adopted a smoother manner. That ended the conference and the attempt at peace.

O'Hara resumed his seat among the twelfth ward delegates, a motion to adjourn until two o'clock was made, seconded and carried without opposition, and the convention adjourned, the spectators going out amid a great murmur of talk, the rustle of summer dresses, and the fluttering of fans.

It would be two hours now until the convention met again, but much might be done in two hours, and everybody intended that much should be done.

The first step of the leaders was to suggest Mr. Stet-

son for permanent chairman. He was an editor, not directly a politician, and not even the Warnerites would dare to accuse him, the idol of the State, of unfairness in his rulings. This is a State which loves its great men, and it would brook no such insult to Mr. Stetson. There were limits which O'Hara himself would not dare to pass. The case was put at once before Mr. Stetson, and reluctantly he accepted.

Music Hall was filled long before two o'clock when the convention was to meet again. The women and the girls came as in the morning in their pretty summer dresses, only they were yet more numerous now, and the audience as seen by those on the stage reminded them, with increasing vividness, of a great rose garden of colour. They even overflowed the space, railed off for the delegates who with true gallantry crowded themselves together to make room, because conventions in this State being always social and spectacular, as well as political, the rights of spectators are thoroughly recognised.

The crowds in the aisles, too, were so dense that Guthrie and the other members of the press had great difficulty in making their way to the stage. Again the big building resounded with the hum of many voices and the flutter of a forest of painted fans. All the windows were thrown open to admit the fresh air.

The temporary chairman called the convention to order and announced that nominations for permanent chairman would now be made. The words were scarcely out of his mouth before Jimmy Warfield sprang to his feet and presented the name of Mr. Stetson.

The nomination came as a surprise to all except the leaders, and was much the more effective on that ac-

count. The roar of applause from both delegates and audience was so spontaneous, so swelling that nothing could withstand it. Guthrie glanced down toward the camp of the insurgents, the delegates from the eleventh and twelfth wards, and he saw the faces of Warner, O'Hara, and those nearest them fall. They were, in fact, taken unawares and swept off their feet. Some one jumped up and made a motion that Mr. Stetson be nominated by acclamation. The motion was seconded, and then it was carried at once, amid thunderous applause, although there was a sullen silence on the part of the rebellious gentlemen representing the eleventh and twelfth wards.

Mr. Stetson was escorted to the chair, and made a short speech, according to custom.

Then, the people bent forward in their seats. The combat was about to begin, and they were in it, heart and soul.

The chairman, the man who was now to rule the battle, settled himself fairly in his seat, his square shoulders and massive chest rising up like a stone tower. With a slight motion of his left hand, he threw back the thick gray hair from his brow, and then swept the convention with one keen, comprehensive glance.

Up sprang Timothy O'Hara, delegate from the twelfth ward, standing amid the faithful crowd of his henchmen, and nominated with orotund speech the Honourable Henry Clay Warner, the friend and champion of the people.

The delegates from the eleventh and twelfth wards moved by a common impulse sprang to their feet, and uttering tremendous shouts waved their hats and stamped the floor. "Warner!" "Warner!" they

cried. The rest of the convention was cold and silent.

Then the names of Headly and Graves in turn were put before the convention by their lieutenants in speeches in which their merits and their necessity to the State were proclaimed.

The last nomination was finished, the last sound of applause died, and the forces now stood upon the battlefield, horse, foot, and guns, each in its proper place ready for action.

A throb ran through the convention, delegates and spectators alike. A great murmur arose as people began to whisper to each other. Down in the two rebellious wards the delegates looked anxious, and O'Hara closely scanned the convention.

Right here was a critical moment. The convention could now proceed by either of two methods: it could adopt a resolution to drop the weakest candidate after the third ballot, and continue to a choice, or continue as they stood to a choice. The first was sure to cause the bolt of the Warnerites, as he was obviously the weakest of the three, and there were votes enough at any time to adopt the resolution.

The temptation among the younger men to offer the resolution, and "put Warner out of business," as they termed it, was strong, but the hands of the cool and wary leaders held the bridle, and they pulled back on the bit. They did not wish merely to win here—that in itself would be a bootless triumph,—but to win at the November election, unscarred, and with no feud behind them. What they wanted now, as ever, was time, time, time, in which something might happen.

The resolution was not offered. O'Hara saw nobody

rise to his feet with a threat in his eye. He, too, did not want the resolution. Neither he nor Warner wished a bolt; that they would take as a last resort, hoping in preference to wear the convention out, and by sheer obstinacy and perversity force the nomination of Warner in the end, thus saving to themselves the colour of regularity.

This anxious pause—anxious for both sides—was over, and the chairman ordered the first ballot. The vote was cast by wards—twelve in all—but the number of votes allowed to each ward was proportioned to its population, the eleventh and twelfth having the most.

The total number of votes in the convention was 332.

The vote of each ward was cast by its chairman of delegates, and the clerk in a mechanical voice announced the result:

Headly	136
Graves	124
Warner	72

.....

To be nominated, a candidate must receive a majority of all the votes cast, nobody had received such a majority, and, therefore, nobody was nominated.

A second ballot was taken, and a third, and a fourth, always with the same result. So fixed and immutable was the vote that not a single figure was changed.

The convention was in a dead-lock.

The afternoon waned, none of the audience left, everybody hoping that something would happen, and the monotony, too, being relieved now and then by passages at arms between the delegates on whose temper the fight was beginning to wear.

The day was near its end. Guthrie glancing through a rear window of the hall saw again the wide yellow river, and the hills beyond, their green, now shaded into purple and gold, and rose by the sunset shadows. Then he looked back once more at the battlefield before him, and wondered how it would end.

The sixth ballot was just finished, and the clerk in that cold mechanical voice like a sound coming from a phonograph, announced the same result.

Then Jimmy Warfield made a motion to adjourn until the next morning, the motion was seconded, and, the recalcitrants raising no objection, it was carried unanimously.

The convention broke up for the day, and the people passed slowly out of the hall, talking over what had happened.

The sun set on the first day's fighting and it was a drawn battle, but a second day was soon to come, and the night between would be filled with such work as the Old Fourth had never seen before. Pale and determined the leaders slipped quietly from the hall.

That was a memorable night in the Old Fourth, and the people felt alike the danger and the honour. They were not out of the hall before the telegraph wires were sending the news all over the United States. This was a pivotal district; always so reliable, it had suddenly become doubtful, and every newspaper in the Union had said so. Hence all eyes were turned that way.

Guthrie left the convention hall with Clarice, and together they walked down the street. The sun had gone behind the hills and the cool of the evening had come. She had thrown a light shawl over her shoul-

ders, but otherwise she was all in white, and to Guthrie she seemed the most beautiful of all the women who had been in the hall.

He knew himself as he was. He loved her. The Count was gone, out of the way, and he was sure that she did not hate him. Then why not speak? But Guthrie thought again of the difference in their material fortunes. She was a great heiress, and he, however much people liked him, and however well he stood in his own profession, could not look forward to any great pecuniary success. He might get the Washington bureau of the *Times*, but even then he would be in no position to ask her to marry him. She might refuse him, she probably would, but he had no right to put her to the proof.

His usually sanguine and optimistic temperament was afflicted with a few moments of painful melancholy, but then he resolutely cast it aside, and would not let her see.

The summer night came down swiftly over the city, but the electric lights twinkled through the dusk, and threw a silver shadow across the sidewalks. The streets were full of people, and many bowed to Guthrie and Clarice, as they walked on together.

They walked among friends, and now and then some one asked Guthrie what he thought the result of the fight in the Old Fourth would be, but he always shook his head and maintained his ignorance; he would state his hopes, but he preferred not to predict.

Guthrie had no notion of quitting the field of battle until the next day—he was too good a soldier for that, knowing how important the night would be. But again,

like the good soldier, he would eat and refresh himself before the contest, and, leaving Clarice at her father's door, he hurried home for that purpose.

He had scarcely finished a hasty dinner before a message came, and he hurried away ready to do his part in the strenuous conflict.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SECRETS OF A NIGHT

ON a quiet street was a quiet little office, where a man with a heavy jaw often sat thinking. He was Hays, familiarly known as the "boss," in reality a hard political worker, who took little reward, giving his services from pure love of the life. He was in many respects a rough man, and perhaps, in some, a trifle harsh. He had had a hard time, having been born in the gutter, and the successful struggle to emerge from it left scars. But he was wonderfully kind to his wife and children, for whom he obtained advantages that had been denied to himself, and his friends always found him as true as steel—he made no secret of hating his enemies.

Hays was not alone to-night, Grayson, Avery, Jimmy Warfield, and several other workers in the cause being with him.

There was a knock at the door, and the next moment Guthrie entered. All were pleased to see him and greeted him warmly.

"We want you to take Warner out for a ride," said Warfield. "Tell him you've got something of the utmost importance to say about this fight, which is the truth. Take a carriage and drive out toward the country—say, on the waterworks road, and the later you get back the better. One of Hays' men will be your driver

and he will understand. Can't you do it? You see how much is at stake."

Guthrie thought for a little while and then answered in the affirmative, although he announced that he would deal with Warner in perfect fairness. A trip together seemed to him entirely legitimate, falling within the limits of moral suasion. "The carriage is waiting at the corner," said Hays, "and you'd better go right away. He'll be rising from the table in five minutes."

Guthrie had grown up in a stern school, and he wasted no more time in words. Bidding them good-night, he started. The carriage, as Hays had said, was waiting at the door, and Guthrie delayed only to glance up at the driver on the seat. It was Jim Curley, one of Hays' best workers, a man well known to Guthrie for courage and fertile resource.

Warner's home was not far away, and in less than five minutes Guthrie was there, just as the front door opened, and Warner himself appeared. Guthrie judged that the member intended to go down town and meet O'Hara, and he knew he must act quickly. Behind Warner appeared the face of a woman, that of Mrs. Warner.

"I was just coming to see you, Mr. Warner," exclaimed Guthrie, leaping out of the carriage. "I've got something important to say. Get in with me, will you, and we can drive along while we talk."

Warner hesitated.

"O'Hara's waiting for me," he said, "and I guess you've talked enough already, Billy."

Mrs. Warner looked at Guthrie with approval and said:

"I'd go with him, Henry, if I were you. Let Mr. O'Hara wait."

Guthrie inferred that Mrs. Warner did not approve of either O'Hara or her husband's course in the convention, and taking advantage of the impression made by her words, he put his hand upon the member's arm and half pulled him into the carriage, saying a polite good evening to Mrs. Warner as he shut the carriage door.

"All right, driver," he said to Curley, "go ahead!"

Curley cracked his whip over two fine horses and they spun along at a great rate through the city and out upon the waterworks road. It was an open carriage, and the fresh breeze created by the rapid motion was wonderfully pleasant and invigorating after the heat and turmoil of the day. Warner, who seemed to have fallen into a sort of collapse after a long period of excitement and stimulated strength, leaned back in his seat, closed his eyes, and enjoyed it to the full. As Guthrie looked at his broad red face, the old feeling of mingled contempt and pity for this sodden man rose in him, unbidden.

It was indeed an evening to lull a tired man—this wonderful June dusk that sometimes falls over this city with the scent of roses in the air, and the faint sighing breeze that comes up from a far wilderness, bringing its hint of deep woods and wild grass untrodden by man. It is said that all the young couples in this city get engaged on such summer evenings as these.

Guthrie, too, felt the peace of the evening and the night wind's cradle-song. It seemed to him so unfitting a time for the strenuous task that he and his friends had to do. Down the cross-street he saw again the wide

yellow river—now silver under the light of the clear stars, but the green hills on the far shore were hidden in the mists and dusk.

They were away now from the business part of the city, passing toward the region of smaller houses. The electric lights twinkled at far intervals, and cottage windows already were darkening as the sober inhabitants sought their early beds. They met scarcely a human being; the noise of the city was dead behind them, the wheels of the carriage rolled smoothly over the asphalt, and they heard only the sighing of that glorious June breeze about their ears, making soft harmonies, as if it were playing upon invisible violin strings.

The houses moved far apart, the asphalt often ran between turfy fields, and off on the left hung the shadow of a forest. They were reaching the country.

The silent driver on the seat looked back once at his two passengers, but neither Guthrie nor Warner noticed it, so much interested were they in what they were saying. The driver was still silent and merely looked straight ahead again, where the loom of a mighty wall arose, a deeper dark against the dusk.

It was one side of the great reservoir of the water-works, a wall many yards high and a full quarter of a mile long. They were now five miles from the city and this was the turning-back place, but Curley, glancing up at the wall, and then at his absorbed passengers, calmly left the road which ran beside it and turned into a narrower road leading toward the South. A wise man was Curley, and he knew his business, which often was to act first and to explain—not at all.

"Why, where are we?" suddenly asked Warner, looking up.

Guthrie glanced about him, and he did not know either.

"Oh, the driver is taking us along some new road, he replied carelessly and honestly. "I wouldn't bother about it."

"We must return at once," said Warner decidedly. "Turn around and drive back, and drive back quick too!"

"All right," said Curley in the same indifferent tone, and wheeling his horses he began the return journey in a trot. When he had gone about a mile, he came to a place where the road forked and he took the wrong fork, although neither Guthrie nor Warner knew it, continuing in a trot toward the southeast and away from the city. Guthrie and the member had begun a conversation in regard to the merits or demerits of the fight in the Old Fourth, and again Guthrie was seeking earnestly to convert Warner.

Deeper and deeper they went into the forest. The road grew duskier and Warner at last noticed their strange pathway.

"Why, where are we?" he exclaimed, straightening up in surprise. "I don't remember ever to have seen this place before. Say, driver, where are you taking us?"

Curley glanced back—he was unknown personally to Warner—and replied with the phlegmatic calm that had marked him all along:

"It's just a short cut that I'm taking through the woods. You said you were in a hurry and I'm trying to save time."

"Oh! it's all right then," said Warner, and he relapsed again into talk and content.

Another half-hour passed, and the road led among small hills, but still in dense forest, the way darkened by overhanging boughs, and the misty bars of moonlight becoming less numerous. Then Warner's mind turned again to the subject of the return, and taking out his watch he looked at it with alarm.

"See here," he exclaimed to the driver, "at this rate we won't get home before midnight. You told me that you were taking a short cut, and if this is the short one I wonder what the long one can be."

The driver with a pull upon the lines stopped the horses and then turned a calm, unruffled countenance to Warner.

"I am sorry to tell you," he said, "but we are lost."

"Lost? What do you mean?" asked Warner.

"It's just as I say," replied Curley easily. "You said you wanted to get back quick, and I was anxious to do it for you. So I took this short cut across the hills, thinking it would be dead easy, but I've got so tangled up here in the woods that I don't know where I am. It jars me to have to confess it, but it's so, and I'll have to call on one of you gents to show the way out."

Guthrie observed Curley closely, and such was the man's earnestness of tone that he was unable to decide about him. But Warner had no doubts. Nevertheless he was aghast; and Guthrie, too, was uneasy.

"Billy, do you know the way out?" cried Warner.

Guthrie looked anxiously at the dark woods, just as Warner had done, and was forced to shake his head in the negative.

"We've got to figure on it somehow or other, Mr. Warner," he said.

After holding a short conference, they decided that it

would be better to turn back, and they drove over their own tracks at a brisk pace. But there was also a fork in this road on the return journey, and the cabman again took the wrong fork, driving into it with such speed and certainty that neither Guthrie or Warner ever doubted for a moment that it was the right one.

The road now led directly away from the city and still passed through a deep forest.

The night, far advanced, darkened considerably, the moon being hid most of the time by shifting clouds, while the road, as before, was overshadowed by the long boughs and dense foliage of the trees.

They ceased now to talk as they drove slowly on, and a certain awe laid hold of Guthrie, who had never before been lost in the forest in the night. The silence was so deep, save for a moaning of the wind through the leaves and the far hoot of an owl, that it oppressed heart and brain alike. The giant tree-trunks marched by in ordered rows like phantoms of the dusk, and here and there a knot-hole or a convolution of the bark was distorted into a mocking face like a ghostly light. The boughs, too, waved at him as if deriding him, and sometimes a soft and leaf-covered twig switching across his face as he passed made him quiver.

The gloom and immensity of the wilderness had taken hold of Guthrie as it takes hold of many in its depths, although he was not fifteen miles from a city of 200,000 inhabitants.

The driver suddenly started in his seat, although neither Guthrie nor Warner noticed the movement, and bent his head a little aside in the attitude of one who listens intently.

He listened for a full minute. Then he straightened

himself up in his seat and from him burst one sharp, sibilant exclamation:

“Geel!”

At the same moment his cigar was dashed from his teeth and the burning end struck one of the horses on the back. The animal neighed, reared, and then drawing his mate with him, ran away down the smooth, hard road. Curley swore, set his shoulders as one does when he pulls hard, but the lines hung loose over the backs of his horses.

Both Guthrie and Warner were much startled at this sudden action of the horses, which threw them violently against the carriage, although the soft cushions saved them from bruises.

“What’s the matter?” exclaimed Guthrie to the driver.

Curley did not look back. He was too busy for that, but he shot over his shoulder in response just two illuminating words: “Running away!”

The country now began to open out somewhat, the trees moved farther apart, and the filtering bands of moonlight grew broader.

On they sped, the carriage swinging from side to side and half bounding over the rough places, but under Curley’s sure guidance remaining in the centre of the road, That worthy never ceased for a moment the peculiar see-saw motion so irritating to the mouth of a horse.

It was like a race, with the cool night air fresh on their faces, the trees running in the other direction, and the regular beat of the horses’ feet on the smooth, gravelled road making a harmonious sound. Once, at the top of a rise, the driver bent his right ear down again as

if he were listening, and then that look of apprehension came over his face a second time. When he straightened up a little, his horses were going faster than ever.

It seemed to Guthrie as they passed down the slight slope and into the level beyond that he, too, heard a faint, far noise behind them, a sound like the echo of the beat of their own horses' feet; and an echo he thought it was at first, but it grew too distinct by and by—it had about it too much of solid reality to be an echo, and when they reached soon the crest of another little rise, he looked back again.

Guthrie almost started from his seat in surprise at what he saw. There on the summit of the swell behind them, the one they had just left, focussed in the moonlight was another carriage, and it, too, had been driven hot and fast, for even at the distance Guthrie could see the horses in a lather.

But it was not the horses, it was the man behind them on the seat beside the driver who interested Guthrie. The face of this man was red like the setting sun, and tipped low down on his forehead was a silk hat, so glossy that it gleamed in the moonlight. Guthrie believed he would have known that face and figure even were there no moonlight. It was O'Hara. The doubts that had been forming in Guthrie's mind became almost a certainty, but he did not know what to do. Meanwhile their carriage sped on.

They topped another swell presently, and Guthrie again glanced back. Great was his joy despite himself, when he did not see O'Hara, and however attentively he listened, he failed to hear the beat of pursuing hoofs.

Curley, too, who had a keener or better trained ear than Guthrie, ceased to hear the sounds of pursuit, and

gradually slackened the speed of his horses. He also turned them into another by-road and presently brought them down to a walk. At last he stopped the carriage in the centre of a wide, open space, and springing out, began to soothe the horses and rub them down with great care.

Warner, who seemed to be somewhat carried away by the rapid swing of events, the knowledge of pursuit not having come to his heavy understanding, opened his watch.

"Billy," he said to Guthrie, "do you know what time it is?"

"No, and I couldn't guess either."

"It's two o'clock in the morning. I wonder what O'Hara thinks has become of me!"

"We must let the horses rest at least half an hour longer," said Curley, "because they are dead beat, I tell you."

At the end of that time they started again, Guthrie and Curley walking beside the carriage and Warner riding in it.

They went on, perhaps three-quarters of an hour in this manner, and saw no sign of a human habitation. Warner fell asleep, and Guthrie and Curley began to look around for a farm-house, where they might find breakfast, as day was approaching.

Guthrie was growing cold and weak. The long strain and the lack of rest and food were telling even upon one so young and vigorous. Moreover, in the chilly dawn—chilly despite the June morning, the comic element of the situation passed from him and now he saw only the tragic. He was a man of honourable and high motives, one who loved frank and open deal-

ing and who disliked secret and underground methods. When he took Warner driving the evening before, it was his purpose merely to reason with him and to keep him as long as possible away from the evil influence of O'Hara. What had happened since was due to a chain of circumstances and events over which he had no control, and he was sincerely sorry that it had happened at all. He would certainly aid Warner as best he could in his effort to get back to the city as soon as possible. At any rate, their present position was not his fault.

They trudged along, neither Guthrie nor Curley speaking for a while, and a gray tint in the East deepened. Then it turned suddenly to flaming gold, and the sun shot up, flooding the heavens with rosy light. The summer morn had come, and after the chill of the long hours before the dawn, the warmth and light were pleasant to Guthrie.

They saw presently a house amid the fields, a two-story, wooden structure of plain appearance, where they obtained food, and learned that they were at least thirty miles from the city. Willville, on the D. & S., was the nearest railroad station, though there was no train due for the city until 3:30 in the afternoon, and it was more likely to be 4:30, the D. & S. being a second-rate branch road.

Warner saw no alternative but to go to the railroad station and wait for the train, and he resigned himself with curious facility. The road was now rough, but neither Warner nor Guthrie complained, as they were sustained by recent food and the morning was so fresh and clear. They talked of the convention, and Warner seemed to assume as a matter of course that O'Hara was keeping his name before it. More-

over, he spoke of drawing votes from Headly and Graves in the course of the balloting. But his talk seemed to Guthrie to lack spirit and fire, as if he did not wholly believe what he was saying, and was talking in order to convince a somewhat incredulous listener—himself, Henry Clay Warner.

They came to an extremely rough place in the road, and Curley picked his way through it. Guthrie was dreaming—that is, thinking of things thirty miles away, and he saw vaguely a large log lying diagonally across one-half the width of the road. Curley turned his horses, but not in time; the front wheels hit the log with a heavy jolt, passed over it and came down again on the other side with a jolt yet heavier. Warner and Guthrie felt the spring of the carriage smash under them with the force of the impact.

"The carriage has broken down," said Curley, "and it's for you gents to pay me."

"We'll talk about that later," replied Warner. "What I want to know now is how we are to get to Willville."

"Walk!" said Curley sententiously and impolitely.

Warner sighed deeply. He was a slothful man and disliked physical exercise, but no freedom of choice was left to him.

"Luck with you, gents," called Curley with grim humour. "I'll come on behind with the carriage."

Guthrie may forget the trials of that walk, but Warner never will. It gave him more muscular exercise than he had known since he was a boy, and as the afternoon grew warm and the sun shone brightly he panted and perspired. They saw at last from the top of a hill a church spire in the far distance.

"Willville!" exclaimed Warner joyfully.

A long, shrill, but lonesome note rose on the air, and assailed their ears. They gazed at each other in dismay.

"It's the 3:30!" gasped Warner, "and it's on time!"

The noise of the distant train ceased for about a minute, indicating the stop at Willville, then began again and was lost at last in the distance. They had missed the 3:30.

Warner was the first to recover from the disappointment, and Guthrie observed with interest the curious development of his character. He had always known that Warner was a coarse man—one in whom the finer instincts were lacking. Mental excitement caused him to deteriorate, but a physical strain had the reverse effect. Put now next to the soil, with an enforced absence from the stimulants that he loved, Warner seemed to improve like an animal of a different order returned to his natural state.

"Hey, you fellers, why ain't you pullin' on for that train?"

It was Curley coming over the brow of the hill, the horses with the carriage following slowly.

"The 3:30 passed half an hour ago," replied Warner.

Then, the procession took up its line of march again, and passed on, Warner leading, Guthrie next, and after him Curley, who was followed by the horses and the carriage. Thus they passed into the village amid the deep and outspoken curiosity of the population, a curiosity to which neither Warner nor Guthrie vouchsafed an answer whatever Curley may have done.

Warner and Guthrie went first to the station and inquired about the next train to the city. There was

an accommodation freight at 8:30, very slow, taking two hours for the thirty miles to the city, but it would get them there at last, if they only had patience—plenty of patience.

“Patience is about all I’ve got left,” said Warner.

“We can telegraph, telling our people where we are,” said Guthrie, “and you can wire, too, your instructions to your delegation in the convention.”

“Billy,” said Warner emphatically, “not a word of mine shall touch a telegraph wire. Don’t you think I’m going to wire to that convention that I’m stuck out here in the woods! Why it would take a message as long as a page of the *Times* to explain it all, and anything less would be worse than nothing. No, sir, they shan’t know anything at all until they see Henry Clay Warner walk into the convention hall, and then I’ll explain if I feel like it.”

And he swaggered with a brief return of his old importance. As they had plenty of time ahead, Guthrie proposed that they go to the hotel and get a bath, shave, and dinner, and return to the city at least looking like gentlemen and Christians. They did all three to the great improvement alike of appearance and physical feeling, Warner growing positively amiable over his dinner, and when the coffee was finished he suggested that they sit on the hotel porch a while in the cool of the evening after the country custom.

Here they tilted back chairs, lighted cigars, and a deep, soothing content stole over both. Warner in particular felt that to enjoy rest, it was necessary to have worked, and to have worked hard.

“Billy,” he said in a slow, happy tone, “I am almost glad to be away from the convention at this time. But

look yonder! Unless I'm mightily mistaken ours isn't the only broken-down carriage coming into town to-day!"

Down the road by which they had entered Willville an hour ago, toiled a slow and melancholy procession. A driver walked on before as Curley had done, but with drooping head and slack arms. Behind him came a carriage in a woeful plight, deep in dirt, sagging on broken springs, and drawn by horses which drooped their heads like the driver, seeming to have lost all their ambition and interest in life. In it sat a drooping man, and the man was Timothy O'Hara, dusty, lank-jawed, pale, disconsolate, and angry, closing in now on what had been hitherto a hopeless quest.

The carriage approached, and O'Hara raising the head beneath the hat looked up. His eyes blazed, and he leaped out of the carriage. Three steps took him to the porch, and another took him inside it. In that sudden moment of passion all his true nature came out, and, shaking his fist in Warner's face, he shouted:

"What do you mean by running away from me—from me, your only friend, the man that's made you? I say, what do you mean by it, Hank Warner?"

The Honourable Henry Clay Warner had not been called "Hank" since he was a boy, and Guthrie, in considering the scene afterward, was quite sure that the application of the term "Hank" was more offensive than anything else O'Hara said. It was here an expression of contempt, so intended and so received.

Warner had all the fighting qualities of his State, and he would never stand personal abuse for a moment. Moreover, he had the consciousness of innocence, and

springing to his feet he retorted in a manner not less warlike than O'Hara's own. But O'Hara continued with angry charges.

Guthrie at length felt that it was time to interfere, and he put his hand upon Warner's arm with a quiet: "Come away, Mr. Warner, I would not quarrel with such a man. He is beneath you!"

Warner, taking his advice, turned on his heel, and went to the other end of the porch with Guthrie. O'Hara glared fiercely after them a moment or two, and then went into the bar-room.

The train was at the station in a few minutes, and Warner and Guthrie, boarding it, took a seat at the far end of the single passenger car attached to the freight. Guthrie looked back, and saw O'Hara, still beneath the crumpled hat, coming aboard. But the Irishman sat in the extreme seat at the other end of the car and gazed sternly out of the window at the trees and fences and houses flitting by. Warner and Guthrie did likewise, and all the time Guthrie was trying to guess what Warner would do, but the member made no sign.

Thus pursuer and pursued returned to the city.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DEADLOCK

THE morning of that day had been an uncommon one in the city, its like unknown since the days of the great Civil War when half the people thought one way, and half, the other. It began for most at the breakfast table when the morning papers were served with the toast and coffee, and they read in those printed columns the amazing fact that Henry Clay Warner, one of the three candidates for the nomination, and Timothy O'Hara, his lieutenant and chief worker, had disappeared, leaving not a trace behind. It was added that William Guthrie, the well-known political writer of the *Times* was gone, too, and he was believed to be with Mr. Warner.

This was news, news of the deepest and most vital importance, still further complicating the fight in the Old Fourth; and lending to it the sombre colours of mystery and tragedy. The telegraph wires had been very busy early in the night, but it was nothing to the burden they were called upon to carry toward morning.

Clarice Ransome read the account at the breakfast table in the same casual unexpected fashion that other people learned it. But the *Times* expressed no alarm about Guthrie, because it felt none, and as she pondered over it her own apprehension departed. Placed now in an atmosphere of keen political rivalry, and

possessed of great natural powers, she inferred that there was more behind the curtain than she could see. Yet she would have given much to discover what it all meant, and like others she was filled with a deep and abiding curiosity to know where Warner was and why he had gone.

Lucy Hastings and Mary Pelham were on the other side of the table, and her glance met theirs.

"Mr. Guthrie will be back in good time," said Lucy Hastings, "I never knew him to fail."

Mr. Ransome appeared at this moment, being somewhat late, and she pushed the papers toward him. He uttered an exclamation of surprise, when he saw the headlines and the pictures, and then he read long with interest. After he finished the newspapers he drank his coffee with deliberation, and putting the cup back in the saucer said:

"I suppose that young Guthrie is very much mixed up in all this?"

She answered quietly:

"Mr. Guthrie is never 'mixed up' in anything."

Mr. Ransome picked up a newspaper, as if he would read again, and hid a faint smile that curved the corners of his mouth.

"Well, perhaps I did use rather a rough phrase," he rejoined, "but I didn't mean to attack the young man's character at all. I believe that nothing is to be said against him on that score. Everybody speaks highly of him."

"They couldn't do anything else," she rejoined spiritedly.

Mr. Ransome smiled again behind his newspaper. He was not a hard man, and he loved his daughter.

Many extra chairs were placed back of the regular seats in Music Hall, and all were filled long before the convention was called to order again. Clarice and her friends were in a box once more. Mr. Stetson went upon the stage amid a dead silence, and knocked loudly for order. Then Mr. James Bluitt, the member of the council from the twelfth ward, and an ally of O'Hara's arose and made a fiery speech about the disappearance of Warner and O'Hara. It must be explained, he said.

The day lagged on with idle votes, and still nothing was heard from the three missing men. The convention, not knowing what else to do, adjourned at 5 P. M. to reassemble three hours later, and the people went home to dinner or supper, according to their social stations.

Among those who wondered about the missing men, as they left the hall, were three besides Clarice, who were thinking far more of Guthrie than of the other two. They were Carton, Mary Pelham, and Senator Pike.

Carton, aside from the gratitude that he owed him, and which he most willingly acknowledged, had a strong personal attachment for Guthrie, hidden sometimes by his naturally cold manner, and now he felt a slight apprehension lest harm had befallen him. But even with Guthrie there for the present, Mary Pelham was always in his thoughts. He had come to the city ostensibly as a looker-on in the great political combat, but in reality it was Mary Pelham that drew him. General and Mrs. Pelham, after his triumphant acquittal, had not discouraged him, and had made some awkward attempts to be polite to him, but his

feeling against Mary remained for a while, and then gave way to constraint. Each day as he sat near her in the box, he thought she looked beautiful, but very distant, and the heart of the man was lonely.

The Ransome party usually went home in two carriages, Clarice or Mr. Ransome assigning them, but now neither did it, thinking perhaps that all was taken for granted, and Senator Pike, Carton, and Miss Pelham found themselves left for the second carriage. The three stood a moment just outside the building, waiting for the crowd to pass.

"I do not think any harm could have happened to Mr. Guthrie," said Mary Pelham.

"No," said the Senator, "that boy has a wonderful way of taking care of himself, but it does not equal the way in which he looks out for his friends."

"That is true," said Carton, "and you and I, Senator, know best of all."

Even in the dusk Carton saw a benevolent but somewhat thoughtful look overspread the lean, angular face of the mountain man.

"Yes," said the Senator, as if in retrospect, "he was the best friend I have ever had, and as for you, Mr. Carton, he saved you, and then he brought you and your sweetheart there together again, which I know was one of his dearest wishes."

Carton started and glanced quickly at Mary. A deep blush covered her face.

"But I will leave you now," said the Senator, "I know that, in such a case as this, two are company and three are none."

He raised his hat with the formal courtesy usual with him, and was gone, leaving the two together at

the curb, with the cabman holding the carriage door open for them. Carton never knew whether the Senator spoke from benevolent ignorance or consummate craft, but mechanically he helped Mary into the carriage, stepped in after her, and then closed the door. The driver cracked his whip and the carriage rumbled away over the granite toward the Ransome home.

Carton was silent for a moment, but he could hear his own breathing and that of the girl beside him. Then he said in a low voice:

"The Senator made an error, Mary; shall we permit it to remain one?"

There was no answer, but the breathing became more hurried.

"Mary," said Carton, and his voice was strong with feeling, "people thought me a criminal once!"

"I never thought so!"

"No, I know now that you did not. I was not a criminal, but I am a fool, and I have long been one. But Senator Pike has shown me the way, and I should be a coward if I did not try to tread it. At least, I shall risk my fortune. Mary, forgive all the past and listen to me when I tell you that I love you. Won't you?"

"You have more to forgive than I."

"It is not so. But love can overlook all. At least, I feel that such as mine ought to win me forgiveness. I love you with all my soul; say that you can return it just a little!"

"Not just a little, but a good deal!"

Suddenly he bent down and kissed her on the lips. She blushed deeply, but she had no words of reproof for him.

When Mary Pelham returned to the Ransome house,

Clarice met her, and one glance at the vivid eyes and happy face was enough.

"Oh, Mary," said Clarice, "he has spoken at last!"

Then the two girls kissed each other.

They were all very quiet at dinner, and immediately afterward they made ready to attend the convention again, except Mrs. Ransome, who majestically declined to be a spectator at such an affair.

Night came down on the city—a hot, troubled, apprehensive night, sown with rumors, reports, and threats like dragons' teeth. The eleventh and twelfth wards again marched away from the hall in solid phalanx, dark and ominous, but everybody came back once more at eight o'clock, keyed to the highest point of interest.

Mr. Stetson took the chair amid a white, expectant silence. It was remarked then by many that the long strain had begun to tell even on his iron powers. A ballot was now ordered and showed no change.

The hot night dragged on and Mr. Bluitt arose again to relieve himself of the angry thoughts that surged in his brain. His hints of foul play grew broader. Jimmy Warfield, ever an effervescent soul, took fire at the charge, and springing up in his chair he shouted that the convention was tired alike of hint and menace; if the eleventh and twelfth wards had any accusation to make, let them make it now in the face of all men. The decent people of the city were tired of being blackguarded and obstructed by rebels and traitors.

The convention was in an uproar in an instant. The eleventh and twelfth wards sprang up in a body, hurling epithets from powerful lungs at Warfield and

all his kind. There was, too, that strange indescribable sound as the whole convention by a single impulse rose to its feet. Some women cried out. Men shouted "Order!" "Order!" "Sit down!" "Sit down!" The chairman, a look of alarm on his face, beat on the table until the head of his gavel flew off, and the whole hall resounded with tumult.

"Look! look!" cried Clarice in an excited tone, seizing her father's arm. "Look! there they come!"

The whole convention heard that sharp, strained cry, and instantly faced about.

The three missing men were entering the hall at the same time, Warner and Guthrie through one door, and O'Hara through another.

All the convention saw in a glance, and the keen-eyed chairman noticed with indescribable relief that Warner and Guthrie were together, and O'Hara alone.

The tumult in the hall was not decreased, but it had now another note. It was a roar of mingled relief, curiosity and excitement. The band perched far up in the balcony, suddenly struck up "Johnny comes marching home," and Clarice, and Lucy, and Mary, in the enthusiasm of the moment, waved their handkerchiefs repeatedly. Clarice was waving hers for Guthrie, although she was unconscious of it then.

The tumult suddenly died and was followed by the deep silence of strained waiting. What was Warner going to do? He and Guthrie presented a sharp contrast to O'Hara; they were clean-shaven, well-brushed, and trim, having rested and repaired themselves at the hotel at Willville, while O'Hara was still unkempt and unshaven. The silk hat with the cruel rent in it he carried in his hand, his beard was fuzzy, and his clothes

were all awry. He looked no longer natty, even in the eyes of the eleventh and twelfth wards, but disreputable.

Warner and Guthrie separated in the centre of the hall, Guthrie going down a side-aisle, and thence through a side-door to the back of the stage, where he slipped quietly into a chair, hidden from notice. Warner, on the contrary, the focus of all eyes, and conscious of it, continued toward a seat in the centre of the twelfth ward.

The convention was surprised to see the member looking so jaunty. Both complexion and eyes were clearer, and he held himself with more dignity than usual. But he gave no signs of his intentions, quickly taking his seat, and shaking the numerous hands that were held out to him.

O'Hara sat down with the eleventh ward, and there he made a sudden change of face. He seemed to awake suddenly to the fact that his angry accusations were injurious to his campaign, and he smoothed out both his clothes and his countenance. He whispered some words to one of his men, and the latter, going over to Warner began to whisper also. Evidently he was opening negotiations for a treaty of peace, and the leaders who saw it from their seats of vantage were alarmed. The whole convention noticed the act also, and there was a loud buzz of comment.

Guthrie saw it, but just then he paid little attention, as a code of mental telepathy was in perfect operation between him and Clarice. He informed her by means of these silent signals that he was well in both body and mind, that no misfortune whatever had happened to him; that he believed everything was coming out all right, and that she was more beautiful than ever.

She telegraphed back that she was overjoyed to see him, that she cared nothing for the disappearance or return of either Warner or O'Hara, that she had perfect confidence in him, and that he was the greatest man in all the world to her.

Few more satisfactory messages than these have been sent and answered, and they established a perfect circuit, connecting these two, and wholly ignoring the rest of the convention.

It was well that the telegraphy was quickly done, as Guthrie was soon dragged from his seat by eager hands and carried off to one of the little rooms where he told the story of the night to eager listeners.

Then he went back to the stage and saw Warner still among his friends, whispering to them. Mr. Stetson had ordered another ballot in order to mark time, and the clerk was calling the monotonous roll of the wards. Guthrie took advantage of the lull and went into the box where Clarice sat with her father and friends. He faced Mr. Ransome without trepidation, and offered him his hand, which the merchant shook with heartiness.

"I am glad to see you returned in safety, Mr. Guthrie," he said, "both for your own sake and because you are one of the central figures in a very interesting event."

Clarice's welcome was still conducted through the medium of mental telepathy, but at a much shorter range, and, therefore, with greater effect.

Carton and Mary Pelham were sitting side by side at a corner of the box, a glow of happiness in the eyes of each, and when Guthrie saw, he knew that somehow or other all was now right between them. The "ex-

plosion," predicted by Jimmy Warfield, had come. "I am awful glad," he said under his breath when he shook hands with Carton, and Carton replied in the same whisper: "Without you it could never have been."

Mr. Ransome and Carton began to talk with each other, and as the fog horn voice of the clerk, droning out the vote, kept the convention occupied, Clarice and Guthrie had a chance to change the telepathic communication for real words with sound to them. The others were in the front of the box looking toward the audience, and Clarice and Guthrie were back in the shadow.

She put her hand in his, a moment.

"Mr. Guthrie," she said, "I do not know where you have been or why you went, but I know it was not to do any wrong."

"Miss Ransome," he said, "I have been on a long journey which I did not mean to take, and I am confident that if I have done anything at all, it has been good."

Then her eyes met his in supreme trust.

"I shall tell you all about it to the last detail, when the convention is over," he added.

"What is going on there now?" she asked. "See, Mr. Warner has left the hall."

"No," replied Guthrie, "he has gone into one of the side rooms, and so has O'Hara; it is nothing."

Yet he was troubled. But he did not see what he could do just then, and it was very pleasant there with Clarice. He was still under a great strain, thirty-six hours without sleep, and his whole nervous system keyed to the highest pitch. So he remained talking

with Clarice, and what was passing in the hall outside their box was a great blur and buzz. But she gave back encouragement to him. Both word and look were alive with it, and for the while he was content.

Thus time passed easily, how long he did not know until Jimmy Warfield burst into the box, his hair flying, and his face aghast.

"Come, Billy! Come at once!" he cried, forgetting his courtesy to a lady, which indicated extreme excitement on the part of Jimmy Warfield.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Guthrie taking alarm.

"Everything's the matter!" replied Warfield. "O'Hara and those fellows have got hold of Warner again, and you know his weakness—well they've played on it—and now he's irresponsible, and they are making him say he'll never withdraw. He won't speak to any of us but you. Come at once or everything will go to ruin!"

"Go," added Clarice in a tone low, but none the less emphatic. He glanced once at her and her eyes met his. That command, he saw, was as much for their sakes as the party's, and he hastened at once from the box.

"In there!" said Warfield, indicating one of the small rooms, and Guthrie, promptly pushing open the door, entered alone.

It was indeed a pitiful spectacle that saluted him in the little room. Warner, whatever his moral growth, and whatever his intentions may have been during that return journey, had fallen again into the hands of the toiler. O'Hara, Bluitt, and Pursley had returned to the charge, and they knew the breach in the

fortifications. Warner had yielded to temptation, and now he was lying upon a sofa, his face inflamed, and his eye wild, while he babbled of a long ride through dark woods and the fact that he, Henry Clay Warner, was the friend of the people and would defend them forever. He was in the race to stay. O'Hara, Bluitt, and Pursley stood by in silence, while a gigantic blacksmith, one Connell, leaned against the wall, his face expressionless.

Frowning looks met Guthrie as he entered, but disregarding them he went straight to Warner.

"Hello, Billy! They didn't lose us did they?" exclaimed the member, holding out his hand and laughing foolishly.

"No, but I wish they had!" replied Guthrie from the bottom of his heart. "Mr. Warner, come with me. These are no friends of yours."

"See here, young man," cried O'Hara threateningly, "that sort of talk don't go with us any longer. Now you clear out, and be quick about it!"

The crowd gave forth a menacing growl, but sudden intervention came, and it was the blacksmith, Connell, who furnished it.

"Let the boy have his talk with Mr. Warner," he said. "This is a free country, and if he wants to say anything, he's got the right to say it."

Two or three others indorsed Connell's emphatic words, and O'Hara and Bluitt hesitated. They were confronted by a rebellion in their own ranks, and they neither liked it nor knew exactly how to meet it. Seeing his opportunity, Guthrie assailed Warner fiercely with unanswerable arguments. He knew that he had a power over the man—a power increased by their

comradeship in the woods, and while O'Hara, Bluitt, and Pursley wrangled with Connell and his friends, he pursued the member with all the energy needed for a last and desperate chance.

Meanwhile the convention was again in a turmoil. The departure of Warner and O'Hara from the floor had been viewed with interest by all and suspicion by many. A rumour—one of those rumours that start no one knows how, and gain colour and strength as they go, spread through the hall, and was believed by nearly everybody. It said that Warner had promised to withdraw, that he had told Billy Guthrie so, that O'Hara, Bluitt, and Pursley were now trying to make him take back the promise.

This rumour, winged and ominous, reached the eleventh and twelfth ward delegates, who yet remained in their seats, and they shifted their feet uneasily. They did not know whether to believe or disbelieve, but they were bound to admit that they were shaken. They had stood in close phalanx a long time, but the long doubt, the heat and the heavy pressure from without disconcerted them. They looked up at the white glare of the electric lights, and they listened to the buzzing of the tiny flies, but they found no answer in either. A bell in a church spire, not far away, tolled midnight.

The rumour continued to grow and took on new colours. It was said that Warner had collapsed suddenly, overpowered by hardships during that long and mysterious absence, but Billy Guthrie knew what he wanted to say. A sudden cry of "Guthrie!" arose, and it was taken up and repeated till it became insistent. "Guthrie!" "Guthrie!" "Guthrie!" rang

through the hall, a chorus rising and falling like a wave, but never stopping.

Clarice was alarmed at first when she heard the cry. She did not know why they should call for Guthrie, and she felt that they had some accusation against him.

Louder and more insistent grew the cry for Guthrie, but neither he nor O'Hara, nor Bluitt, nor Pursley reappeared, although minute after minute passed until they made an hour. But nobody left the convention, and still they shouted for Guthrie.

CHAPTER XX

THE BREATH OF FAME

THE convention had reached an impassable barrier. There was no doubt of it, and the fact was apparent even to the youngest of the audience. It needed no words to tell it; the "feel" of it was in the air. The hall was closer and hotter than ever, and the electric lights glared with a searching cruel, white light. Down in the body of the hall the delegates showed all the marks of a long, fierce, and bitter battle. Their eyes were red and so were their eyelids. Their faces were drawn, and disclosed new wrinkles, their hair was dishevelled, and every collar was limp. The angry, downward turn of the lips showed, too, that they would not stand much more. The cry for Guthrie was, therefore, a sort of relief—perhaps the last left to them, and it was taken up and repeated by all, swelling continually.

But Headly and Graves had quite reached the end of their patience. They were in open and unquelled rebellion, and in a side room opposite the one in which Guthrie and Warner and O'Hara were talking they were telling the leaders that the time for them to act had come, and no further excuse for delay would suffice. It was now past one o'clock in the morning, a ballot must be ordered, and after that Warner must be declared out of the race. Nothing that the leaders said could soothe two angry men or extend their patience.

Meanwhile the convention still stamped the floor and roared for Guthrie, without knowing just why it called him.

But Guthrie, engrossed in a hard task behind closed doors, did not hear the cry. Again it was a struggle between him and O'Hara for Warner, with Bluitt and Pursley actively seconding O'Hara, and the blacksmith, Connell, inclining to Guthrie's side. Even in those moments of excitement and haste this psychological aspect appealed to Guthrie; it was a combat between the good and evil in Warner, and, for the present, the fight seemed to be waged on even terms. Again and again the man wavered; now he was ready to go and announce to the convention that he would withdraw, and then he was equally ready with his old assertion: "I am in the fight to stay."

The struggle across the hall with Headly and Graves was equal to this in fire and intensity, but it lacked its dramatic phases, and there was less at stake. Warner now and then got upon his feet and walked, or rather staggered, across the room, and then back and forth, until he was tired, after which he would fall upon the sofa again. He wanted, too, at times to declaim upon his wrongs, and the unfairness of the leaders toward him, but he never varied in his esteem and liking for Guthrie, whom he frequently called his "good friend," before O'Hara and Bluitt themselves.

Pursley presently slipped out and returned in a few moments with a brimming cocktail. "Here, Mr. Warner," he said, "drink this; it will refresh you and clear you mind." Warner swallowed it instantly, and then under the influence of the potent fire grew more belligerent.

"Billy," he exclaimed, waving his hands in an oratorical manner, "I am in the fight to stay. Go back and tell them that I shall never withdraw!"

Then he fell exhausted by his effort, and Guthrie suddenly losing hope, turned away in despair. Was all his work to come to this miserable end? Nor will he ever forget the sneering look of triumph on the faces of Warner and Bluitt. With his hand on the door-knob he could not withhold a farewell shot.

"Mr. Warner," he said, "I think you will live to be a better man than you are at this moment."

Then stepping out he closed the door and entered the narrow aisle leading to the stage. He paused there a moment, his face suddenly growing pale and the blood leaping up from his heart. It was the sound of his own name repeated by thousands of voices that startled him and held him to the spot. 'It is a thing that has a marvellous effect upon a man when he hears it for the first time, touching new pulses and arousing new emotions, and Guthrie for a moment trembled. Nor could he understand this cry, why it had begun, or why it continued.

He stood there, still hesitating, a solitary figure in the dusky little aisle, while the great audience without still roared his name.

As he stood listening two figures hastened to him. They were Jimmy Warfield and Connell, and Guthrie forgot to be surprised at seeing them together.

"Billy," exclaimed Warfield, "he'll withdraw! He'll withdraw! He takes it all back! Ask Connell here if it isn't so!"

Billy looked at Connell and the big blacksmith nodded his head. There was started afterward, no

one knows how, a rumour that Warner later on asked Connell just when he gave him that message, but it has never been verified. Guthrie, however, was not thinking then of such questions as the manner and origin of the message, but of its import. He felt as if a mighty and crushing weight had been lifted, and for a moment he felt himself on the verge of collapse. The triumph had come so unexpectedly that he could hardly believe it, and he remained speechless a few seconds, while the sound of his own name still thundered in his ears.

"Does he mean it? Does he really mean it?" he asked at last.

"Yes," replied Warfield, and the blacksmith nodded.

"Then, for God's sake bring him on at once and let him make his speech of withdrawal. The convention can't hold together much longer!"

He was looking down the narrow aisle toward the stage. He saw that Mr. Stetson had temporarily abdicated the chair in favour of another man, and was coming toward him, while over and beyond the head of the editor he saw a cross-section of the great audience—hot, impatient, angry, and making much noise.

"We must get Warner on at once," he repeated half mechanically.

"He can't come," replied Warfield significantly. "He's sick, don't you know? He can't stand up and he says he won't face an audience now!"

The big blacksmith nodded again.

"Then what's to be done?" cried Guthrie.

"Why, you must speak for him," replied Warfield. "He says you are to do it, that you have a speech for him

and somebody has told the audience, too. Don't you hear 'em shouting your name!"

The chairman reached Guthrie at that moment, and at once grasped the full import of the talk.

"Come Billy! Come!" he cried, "you must go on instantly."

"But I can't make a speech!" exclaimed Guthrie.

"You can!"

"But I haven't any to make!"

"That speech you wrote for Warner! The one you recited for me in my office! Hurry! The people will tear the house down, if you don't come!"

Guthrie still hesitated, overcome by a sudden and great terror.

"The fate of the Old Fourth now depends on you alone," shouted the Chairman in his ear.

It was a cry for help, that touched the inmost fibres of Guthrie's being, one to which he never failed to respond, and he took a step forward. Others came crowding behind him, Mr. Stetson, Warfield, Grayson, Hays, and so many more that in a moment he found himself on the stage, face to the audience.

Then that great cry of "Guthrie!" "Guthrie!" rolling, insistent, ever-growing ceased so suddenly that the silence following it, was deathly and painful.

Guthrie was white to the lips, and he felt every nerve in him trembling, but he walked to the centre of the stage, swaying slightly.

Not a thought would come, his tongue lay dry in his mouth, and before his eyes there was a blur and a haze, in which thousands of upturned, expectant faces melted into a great, threatening human cloud. Then

his gaze wandered to one side and there he saw her in the box, not in a cloud nor in a haze, a flushed and beautiful face, and two luminous eyes that met his and said: "I know you cannot fail!"

Then he turned again to that mighty curve of human faces, rising before him, row on row, every pair of eyes bent upon him. The silence in the hall was yet deathly and painful. A sheet of paper was heard fluttering to the floor.

Then a spark leaped up suddenly in Guthrie's breast and burst into a flame. The blood came flushing to his face, and with it a giant courage that held him in its grasp. The mist and the haze floated away, and the faces still rose before him, row on row, but beckoning and friendly now. All the thoughts, all the ideas that had been growing in his brain all these years crowded for utterance, and the words rushed to the tip of his tongue.

He began to speak, at first in a voice nervous and trembling a little, but soon gaining volume and decision, until its rich tones filled every corner of the great hall. He began with the speech that he had written for Warner, the renunciation, the sacrifice of self for party, and the general good, changing from the first to the third person, but somehow Warner soon glided from his scheme of things. He forgot all about the red-faced man on the sofa in the little room, and his veering to and fro as the wind blew—all about the squalid struggle with Headly and Graves on the other side of the hall, and remembered only his conception of public life and public duty. He was still within the lines of the speech that he had written, but it no longer had a personal and particular application.

He was speaking from the heart, and the words came fast but in orderly sequence.

He looked down once at the Chairman, who had resumed his seat, and whose eyes met his in a fixed, admiring gaze, then his look passed on and met another pair of eyes in a box, softer, more luminous, and shining now with absolute faith and joy.

Guthrie felt a curious exaltation. Timid at first he has now absolute ease and confidence. He was a musician who knew his instrument, and there before him was that instrument, the audience. He noted then how the look upon that mighty curve of faces changed, as he willed that it should change, how it expressed joy, or sadness, or anger, as he touched the keys.

And as he spoke the deep, intense, rapt silence of the audience continued.

Something wonderful was happening.

And everybody in that great crowd knew it.

They knew that an orator of the first rank, a statesman and a man of genius had been disclosed suddenly to them. The form of the man on the stage seemed to them to grow, his eyes were alight, his face inspired, the deep rich tones of his voice filled their ears, and his words appealed alike to head and heart. Many of them began to think of an earlier day, when a man of their State was the first in the Union, one upon whose words the nation hung, and now they foresaw that the day had come back again and the great man's successor stood before them.

Guthrie spoke on, gathering power as he went. The thoughts and the aspirations of his boyhood,

his youth, and his young manhood were finding vent, and he rejoiced like a strong man in his strength and skill.

New thoughts came crowding upon each other, and all were fresh, original, phrased in striking language, and delivered in a compelling voice. It was a speech, too, on a new plane, something higher and loftier than the ordinary, something that took the listeners out of themselves, something that made them think now of better things.

Guthrie looked once down toward the eleventh and twelfth wards, and he saw the dense cohorts of the rebels, their faces eager and bent forward like the rest. And he saw, too, in the very centre of the group, the red and startled face of Warner, and beside him the broad features of the blacksmith, Connell. He did not know how they had come there, and it was not for him to wonder then. But he knew that he held all under his spell, the eleventh and twelfth wards with the others.

He painted for them new ideals, he inspired them with a sense of new duties, he showed a contempt of sordid party squabbles, he made them look beyond the narrow confines of the Old Fourth District, however glorious it might be, toward the affairs of the Union and the world. His were the views of a true statesman—one who did not build merely for to-day, but for time, one who was not seeking personal advantage, but the good of all.

And they listened and believed. The hour and the man, so often quoted, and so often quoted falsely, had come together—this time in truth and reality, and every one knew it. In the moment of doubt, anger,

and despair, he had appeared and involuntarily all turned to him, as the compass turns to the pole.

Clarice in her box listened with wet eyes and overflowing heart. She had long believed in him, and now all that she had believed, and more, was coming true. She looked up at her uncle, who kept his eyes fixed on Guthrie, and then at her father, who was leaning forward now, his hands on the edge of the box, and listening with the air of a man who did not care what came afterward. The feeling of triumph deepened, and when she looked out again at the great audience, held by the magician's spell, her heart was filled with pride and exultation.

The clock in the church steeple boomed two o'clock, but no one noticed. It was hotter than ever in the hall, long crowded by the multitude, and the thrice-breathed air grew thicker and thicker, but no one noticed it. Behind Guthrie at the press tables, one of which he had so lately left, the reporters were writing for dear life, and noiseless messenger boys were slipping away to the telegraph offices with page after page of the most sensational speech of the decade. Again the wires were clicking industriously with the news from the fight in the Old Fourth, but it was news of another kind. Despatch after despatch was sent to the great newspaper offices in New York and Boston, and Chicago, and elsewhere, all foreshadowing the end, all foreshadowing it in the same way. "What a pity we haven't his picture now!" more than one shirt-sleeved night editor said.

But Guthrie unconscious of all the wires that he had set to talking, spoke on, eye and mind fixed on that political ideal which he had so often imagined

for himself, and down there among the rebel delegates, Warner, still red-faced and startled, never moved nor said a word.

Guthrie was still playing on the great instrument, his audience, and his hand was the hand of a master. He tore the secrets out of their hearts, there was no emotion they could feel that he did not arouse; they saw white or they saw black, as he pleased, but always he led them on to higher thoughts and higher ideals than those of every day. They, too, forgot the hot and crowded hall, the stifling air, the glaring electric lights, and followed him into loftier and purer regions.

Clarice alone in all that multitude was able to take her eyes from the orator, and it was because she loved him best. Great as was his speech, the man was more to her, and in that hour of her supreme joy and triumph she looked to see its effect upon others. The Chairman, an uncommon man himself, still had his eyes fixed on the speaker's face, her uncle and her father, Mr. Carton, and Mr. Pike did not move, nor did Warner, the rebel, the irreconcilable, and O'Hara himself was crushed down in his seat, anger, fear, and admiration struggling on his face which was always turned toward Guthrie.

Guthrie spoke on and on. The fountain of speech had been unloosed suddenly in him, and it came sparkling in all its vigour and freshness. The crowd hung on every word. There was the faint rustle of a skirt now and then, the soft, sighing sound of the painted fans as they moved slowly, and the deep drawn ah! of some one stirred to new emotion, but no other sound. Golden speech had indeed come back to earth for them, and they were held by its spell. The night grew closer

and hotter, and the heavy air hung heavier in the hall, but they noticed it not; they were seeing new scenes, thinking fresh thoughts, as the orator led them into purer regions, free from the mean and sordid aspects of common life.

It was the very boldness and loftiness of Guthrie's ideal that charmed the people so much. He dared to speak for the right, the best in all things, he appealed to the good instinct in every one, and it came so spontaneously, so flowingly, ringing so clearly with the truth, and clothed in such beautiful words that it carried conviction to the dullest. There was none who could not understand him, there was none to whom he did not make an appeal, and there was none whom he did not carry with him into that higher region where one can think only good thoughts.

He, too, was borne up by a mental exhilaration. The words came of their own accord—it seemed to him that he was merely speaking them, an organ upon which some one was playing—he used few gestures, and his face was still pale, but his eyes were alive. Thoughts of long ago, illustrations forgotten until then, came crowding for utterance, and always he had the right words and the right way to say them. The great men of the convention—those who had spoken in its beginning, leaned forward like the others, and let its music and logic pervade them. They knew, like the crowd, that here was one of golden speech, and they knew, too, it was a gift direct from the gods: an orator, like a poet—born, not made.

The reporters wrote on and on, and the telegraph boys still slipped from the hall with sheet after sheet of the speech, but no voice was heard save Guthrie's

as he spoke of his ideal—the ideal public life, and the ideal people—the two were dependent on each other, they went hand in hand, he said. And the crowd, hearing, believed. They could not resist the logic of that voice and manner; what he said to them was true, because it was the truth, and because he said it.

The end came now, the last of the golden words was spoken, the orator made a brief bow, and turned from the stage. For a few moments the spell lingered and the silence continued. Then the long-pent emotion and delight of the audience burst forth, and the storm of cheers swelled and roared against the roof. Again that powerful and insistent cry, "Guthrie!" "Guthrie!" was taken up and every one in the convention sprang to his feet.

It was an emotional crowd, keyed to a high pitch by a long strain of doubt and excitement, and now it broke bounds. Handkerchiefs were waved like the fluttering of a snow-storm, and the shifting fans glittered like prisms of many colours. Again and again the applause rose and swelled like waves of the sea, but Guthrie sat at his desk, limp and tired, his face pale again. The Chairman at length took him by the arm and compelled him to go forward and bow. Then the applause broke out afresh, and the great building trembled with the concussion.

The cheering died at last, and then watchful Jimmy Warfield, back again in his seat among the delegates, sprang to his feet on his chair, and instantly caught the Chairman's eye. A look of complete understanding passed between the two.

"Mr. Chairman," shouted Warfield, and again the convention became silent.

Warfield, too, was silent a moment, and swept the hall with a comprehensive eye. He saw that another critical moment had come, and he was ready.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "there has been a fight for the nomination in the Fourth District, this glorious Old Fourth that all of us love so much. It has been a long, hard, and bitter fight, and through it all every one has been in the dark. We have not been able to see how it would end, we could not see a light ahead, and many of us have thought it would come to disaster and ruin for the Old Fourth. But at the last moment—the very last moment—there has arisen one who, all unconsciously, has shown us the way."

He paused for a few moments, but he held the convention with his eye.

"Yes," he resumed, "there is one who has shown us the way, he has come among us like an apostle, his words are tipped with lightning, and there is none here who has resisted their force—none who has cared to do so. Gentlemen of the convention, we know the opposing elements that are in this hall, we know how bitter the three candidates have become against each other, we know that they can never be reconciled, and we know now that no one of the three can ever be elected. But, gentlemen of the convention, there is another—another man, the very mention of whose name will set you all on fire—one whose supreme fitness for the place has been disclosed in such a manner that the blind may see. Gentlemen of the convention, I wish to place in nomination an orator, a statesman and a genius, William Guthrie."

Again that mighty volume of cheering went up against the roof. Guthrie tried to spring to his feet,

but Grayson and Hays held him down. When the cheering died there was another man on a chair, and it was the member from the Old Fourth. He was pale now, but he stood steadily, and everybody in the convention knew that the grace of God had touched Henry Clay Warner at last.

The Chairman recognised Mr. Warner, and the convention settled into silence.

"Mr. Chairman," said the member in a full, firm voice, "I have listened to all that the gentleman has said, and I wish to endorse every word of it. I have known William Guthrie a long time—since he was a little boy. No truer or more honest man ever drew the breath of life. He has been a good and loyal friend of mine, and he is yet. I have wanted the nomination from the Old Fourth, but I recognise that a greater than myself has appeared, without any will of his own, in the field. Therefore, while withdrawing in favour of William Guthrie I second his nomination, and move also that it be made unanimous."

Again the audience cheered and cheered, and now they cheered for Warner, too. Headly and Graves quietly left the hall, as they saw their forces slip from them, swept on by the universal tide. The convention had been stampeded for Guthrie, without any intention on his part, and the eleventh and twelfth wards were not the last in enthusiasm. O'Hara, Bluitt, and Pursley said nothing, but in stoical silence watched the waves roll over them.

Guthrie tried to spring up again, but as before Grayson and Hays held him back.

The Chairman instantly put the vote on the motion.

When the ayes were called they were thundered out, when the noes were called there was silence.

William Guthrie was the nominee of the convention.

His eyes wandered again to the box and met hers shining with pure joy.

"Accept!" "Accept!" cried the crowd.

"Accept!" cried the Chairman. "Headly and Graves have just notified me of their withdrawal. See, here are their notes. It is you or nobody!"

"Accept!" "Accept!" still roared the crowd.

Guthrie saw that the way had opened without any will of his own, and that it was the only way. Many thoughts passed like lightning through his head. He was a true friend of Warner, and he had worked faithfully for Headly and Graves, but this was the call of destiny. He met her eyes again, and she told him to accept. Then he hesitated no longer.

But Guthrie made no more speeches that night. He walked forward and announced simply that he accepted the great honour conferred upon him so unexpectedly by the convention, and, if elected would do his best for the district, his State, and the country. Then he sat down amid more cheers, and the Chairman sprang to his feet.

"Gentlemen," Mr. Stetson exclaimed, "Mr. Guthrie is now the nominee of the convention, and we promise each and every one of us, to make his majority six thousand."

The convention roared back approval, but Mr. Stetson underestimated it. When the vote was counted at the close of the polls on election day, Guthrie's majority proved to be over seven thousand.

Guthrie was still in a sort of dream. Something

new and wonderful had happened in his life, a thing perhaps which he had imagined at times in a vague twilight or a misty dawn, but which it had never occurred to him might become real. The hall and the figures in it were hazy, and he did not feel that he had yet come quite back to earth.

But they were calling for him again, calling so powerfully and so insistently that he must respond, and he walked forward still in a mist, and bowed again and again to the applause which leaped up afresh at the sight of his face. When he returned to his seat, Warner himself came upon the stage, and he grasped Guthrie's hand.

"Billy," he said—and there was genuine pleasure in his face, and relief, too—relief at escape from the snare of the toiler, "I congratulate you. It was the finest speech I ever heard in my life, and since I couldn't have the nomination myself—I see now that I couldn't—I'm glad you got it. And I know, too, that it came to you because it had to; you never worked for it."

Guthrie returned Warner's hand-shake with sincere joy. He would not have in Warner's mind any lurking feeling against him because, if it were there, it would spoil all his pleasure in the nomination, but he knew now that Warner saw and understood.

Then his friends came, the Governor and his wife, Carton and Mary Pelham, Jimmy Warfield, Senator Pike, the Bishop, and others. He saw sincere joy shining in the eyes of every one of them.

"Billy," said Carton, "we shall go to Washington together, but I shall never be the great man that you are. I can never reach the heart of the people as you do."

"God bless you, my son!" said the Bishop simply.

Then came a quiet, smoothly shaven man in a gray sack suit.

"Mr. Guthrie," he said, "I am perhaps less surprised at this revelation than anybody else in the hall. Believe me when I say that I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart."

It was Caius Marcellus Harlow who spoke.

Next came the gigantic blacksmith, Connell, who imprisoned his hand in a grip like that of his own vise.

"Mr. Guthrie," he said, "I thought of you for it, when you were in that room talkin' so well to Mr. Warner, and I'll be proud to vote for you."

"Billy," exclaimed Tommy Newlands with enthusiasm, "I'm going to write another poem about you!"

"And I'll see that it gets printed this time!" said Warfield.

Guthrie glanced toward the auditorium where the crowd still lingered, and he saw O'Hara and Bluitt sheepishly leaving the hall. Connell's eyes followed his.

"They'll vote for you, and they'll work for you, too," said the blacksmith. "They have to or they'll be dead forever politically. The eyes of the eleventh and twelfth wards are on 'em."

The crowd began to go out at last. The clock in the church steeple was striking three. Guthrie looked at the empty seats, the floor littered with newspapers, and the electric lights that still glared overhead. "What a change has occurred in those last two hours!" he thought.

"Mr. Guthrie," said Mr. Ransome who stood at his elbow, "it is late, and you are very tired. We have two carriages waiting for our party, and we shall be

glad to drop you off at your house. We shall consider it an honour."

Clarice was behind them and she said nothing, but there was a deep colour in her face; her eyes told him to come.

Mr. Ransome turned away to see about the carriages, and Clarice said to Guthrie:

"All your life you have been helping people to great rewards, and now your own has come to you at last."

"But I am going to ask for far more than I have now," he said.

"Why what is it?" she exclaimed, and then her face flooded with sudden and deeper colour.

"I am asking for you, Clarice. Don't you see that I love you, that I have long loved you! I can ask you now. Won't you be my wife, Clarice?"

She put her hand in his and replied softly:

"Yes, I am yours."

"Mr. Guthrie," said Mr. Ransome, as they drove through the streets, "I should think that you are a very happy man this morning."

"I am, but there is one thing lacking to complete my happiness," replied Guthrie.

"And what is that?"

"Your daughter. Give her to me," said the new statesman boldly.

A twinkle appeared in Mr. Ransome's eye.

"Perhaps I should," he replied, "because if I don't you will take her. I'll see that Jane approves too. Leave that to me. And Mr. Guthrie I have just learned to believe in you."

A soft, warm hand stole into his.

"Billy, I *always* believed in you," she said.



“But I am going to ask for far more than I have now.”

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